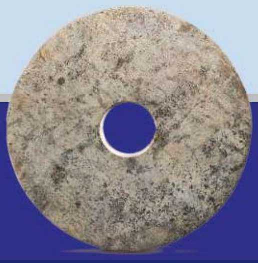

Glorious ruins

Liangzhu archaeological site offers clues on Chinese civilization LIFE, PAGE 16

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Protracted battle

Putin warns of lengthy conflict with Kyiv, says conscription has ended

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CHINA DAILY

FRIDAY, December 9, 2022 中国日报 chinadaily.com.cn RMB ¥2

Visit further cements Sino-Saudi ties

Nations pledge to increase bilateral trade, investment, boost cooperation

By XU WEI in Riyadh
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Beijing and Riyadh agreed on Thursday to scale up Belt and Road cooperation, expand bilateral trade and investment and boost coordination on international and regional affairs during President Xi Jinping's state visit to Saudi Arabia.

Xi had talks with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud at Al Yamama Palace, in his first visit to the Arab country since 2016.

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The Chinese president also signed an agreement with Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud on a bilateral comprehensive strategic partnership, and the two sides agreed to host summits between their heads of state on a biennial basis.

In talks with the Saudi crown prince, Xi underscored Beijing's steadfast support for the sovereignty, security and stability of Saudi Arabia, saying that China will support the nation in continuing to follow a path that suits its national conditions.

China supports the Vision 2030 and Middle East Green initiatives from the Saudi side and is willing to take a proactive part in the industrialization process of the Middle Eastern country and help with the nation's efforts to diversify its economy, he said.

He called on the two sides to better align the Belt and Road Initiative and Vision 2030, and to enable more outcomes from bilateral cooperation.

China stands ready to scale up its crude oil imports from Saudi Arabia, boost cooperation in exploration and exploitation and enable the sound implementation of the ethylene project in Fujian province, he said.

The two sides should bolster cooperation in production capacity and infrastructure cooperation, work more closely together in trade, investment and finance and expand their cooperation in e-commerce, the digital economy, clean energy, high technology and research and development in the aviation sector, he said.

Xi highlighted the need for greater cooperation in law enforcement, security, counterterrorism and the eradication of extremism.

Xi expressed his delight at the letter he received from the over 100 representatives of people studying Chinese in the Arab country, saying that the nation is willing to work toward more outcomes in bilateral cooperation in the Chinese language learning.

Beijing agreed to include Saudi Arabia as one of the destinations for Chinese tourists on organized tours to expand bilateral people-to-people exchanges, he said.

Xi stressed that China supports Saudi Arabia playing a greater role in international and regional affairs and stands ready to boost bilateral communication and coordination in multilateral platforms including the United Nations and the Group of 20.

He expressed Beijing's readiness to make the first China-Arab States Summit and the China-Gulf Cooperation Council Summit events of milestone significance in relations between China and Arab countries and China and the GCC, and bring the ties to a higher level.

The Saudi crown prince said his country is the comprehensive strategic partner of China in the Middle East.

Riyadh looks forward to greater mutual support with Beijing and joint commitment to upgrade the bilateral comprehensive strategic partnership to a higher level, he said, adding that he believes the visit will be a key milestone in bilateral ties.

Saudi Arabia remains firm in adhering to the one-China principle and supporting the nation's efforts in safeguarding its sovereignty, security and territorial integrity, he said.

He said the Arab country is willing to work with China in the joint building of the Belt and Road, expand trade and two-way investment and scale up cooperation in the automobile, science and technology, chemical engineering and mining sectors.

It is important to boost cooperation in energy and food security and the response to climate change, he said.

China is the top trade partner of Saudi Arabia, and the Middle Eastern country is China's largest source of oil imports.

Trade between the two nations reached a total volume of $87.31 billion in 2021, up by 30.1 percent year-on-year.

Xi also attended a ceremony in which he received an honorary doctoral degree from King Saud University.

Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud welcomes President Xi Jinping in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on Thursday. REUTERS

Xi hails work on research about history of New China

By CAO DESHENG
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President Xi Jinping has congratulated researchers of the history of New China and called on them to work to further encourage people to firm up their historical confidence and foster a strong intellectual power to strive in unity for national rejuvenation.

Xi, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made the remark in a congratulatory letter sent to the Association of National History of the People's Republic of China on the 30th anniversary of its founding.

Xi said in the letter that over the past three decades, the association has made significant contributions to the cause of advancing research, publicity and education on the history of New China.

He encouraged the association to stick to the correct political orientation, uphold historical materialism, and follow the guidance of Marxism adapted to the Chinese context and the needs of the times.

Xi urged efforts to fully grasp the main themes and trends of the history of the PRC and to continuously improve work on research, publicity and education to make new contributions to the building of a modern socialist country in all respects and the advancing of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

Xi's letter was read by Li Shulei, a member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and head of the Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee, at a ceremony to mark the association's founding anniversary on Thursday.

Li called for pushing research of the history of New China toward greater development.

The association, a national academic organization, was established in December 1992.

Province's delegations seek to get more orders

By MA ZHENHUAN in Hangzhou and CANG WEI in Nanjing

A business delegation from East China's Zhejiang province has started a six-day trip to Germany and France on a flight chartered by the provincial Department of Commerce, in a bid to bring more business to China and offer international companies increased access to China's huge market.

The two destinations are the first stops of Zhejiang's campaign to "send 1,000 business delegations and 10,000 companies to explore the international market". The delegation is China's first business team led by provincial-level commerce authorities to travel abroad since the COVID-19 pandemic began.

Through such government-led business trips, it is hoped that companies will be more upbeat about their growth prospects and more willing to go abroad and communicate with international counterparts, according to Li Lin, an official with Zhejiang's Department of Commerce who is also the delegation's secretary-general.

"We will promote Zhejiang's business environment and innovative measures and explore opportunities for economic and trade cooperation between Zhejiang and European countries," said Li.

The delegation, which represents 31 companies, is expected to visit local companies as well as businesspeople with Zhejiang roots to learn more about the local market and take part in international exhibitions.

"We really need such face-to-face opportunities, since we haven't been to Europe for three years and we are unclear what is going on in some local industries and companies," said Fei Zhongfu, a member of the delegation.

Fei is chairman of Jiaxing Ruili Textile Co, a leading manufacturer of knitted fabric. The company, which was founded in 2007 in Jiaxing, Zhejiang, relies heavily on foreign trade.

Ni Huping, the vice-mayor of Jiaxing, said that foreign-trade companies in the city have lost orders and faced great challenges due to disruptions caused by COVID-19.

"The latest initiative seeks to recapture lost orders," Ni said. "But more important, it aims to boost the confidence not only of Chinese companies, but also international companies that cooperate with us."

The trips are also meant to rebuild trust and dispel any misunderstandings among some foreign companies that might have resulted from a lack of face-to-face communication in the past three years, he said.

Jiaxing's government has separately organized a 96-person delegation to Japan and a smaller one to Europe. In addition, Ningbo, another export-oriented city in Zhejiang, sent a business delegation to the United Arab Emirates on Tuesday.

See ***Orders,*** *page 4*

Workers at a factory in Ningbo, Zhejiang province, pack electric heaters for export to Europe in late September. Orders for China-made heating appliances have surged recently. WANG GANG / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Li vows to better balance growth, response to virus

By MO JINGXI in Huangshan, Anhui
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China's economic growth will steadily pick up with the implementation of the 10 newly adopted measures on further optimizing the COVID-19 response, Premier Li Keqiang said on Thursday, vowing to better coordinate the country's epidemic response and socioeconomic development.

Li made the remark when meeting with David Malpass, president of the World Bank Group, in Huangshan, Anhui province. Malpass and other heads of major international economic organizations are in China for the "1+6" Round Table Dialogue, which will open on Friday.

Li also met on Thursday with Kristalina Georgieva, managing director of the International Monetary Fund, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, director-general of the World Trade Organization, and Mathias Cormann, secretary-general of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

When asked about China's economy and the COVID-19 response, Li told Malpass that given the epidemic's impact, it was no small feat that China has achieved stable employment and prices, maintained overall economic stability and kept major economic indicators within a proper range.

In the first nine months of the year, China created 10.01 million jobs in its urban areas, according to the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security.

China will work to better protect people's safety while maintaining the normal order of life and work, Li said.

He also expressed China's willingness to deepen its relations with the World Bank to improve global economic governance and jointly tackle the complex issues facing the world economy.

Malpass commended China's adjustment of the epidemic response policy, saying that the World Bank welcomes China's continuous efforts to expand opening-up and is ready to deepen cooperation with the nation in areas such as trade and knowledge to promote common global development.

See ***Growth,*** *page 4*

COVID PATIENTS TELL THEIR STORIES AFTER INFECTION

Road to recovery taken as hospital workers praised

Editor's note: *Four people infected with COVID-19 over the past three years tell how they contracted it, the treatment given, and the recovery they made. Their stories shed light on people's thoughts about the devastation, government prevention measures, and life in general during the pandemic.*

indepth

By TAN YINGZI and DENG RUI in Chongqing, ZHANG YU in Shijiazhuang and CHEN MEILING in Beijing

Li Qiang, 32, a small-business owner, in Shapingba district, Chongqing

I became infected on Aug 16 on my way to work around 7:30 am. I wasn't wearing a face mask because it was very hot. The local disease control and prevention center later found that I had a brief face-to-face encounter with another virus carrier, who was also not wearing a mask, when we used a pedestrian crossing.

See ***Patients,*** *page 2*

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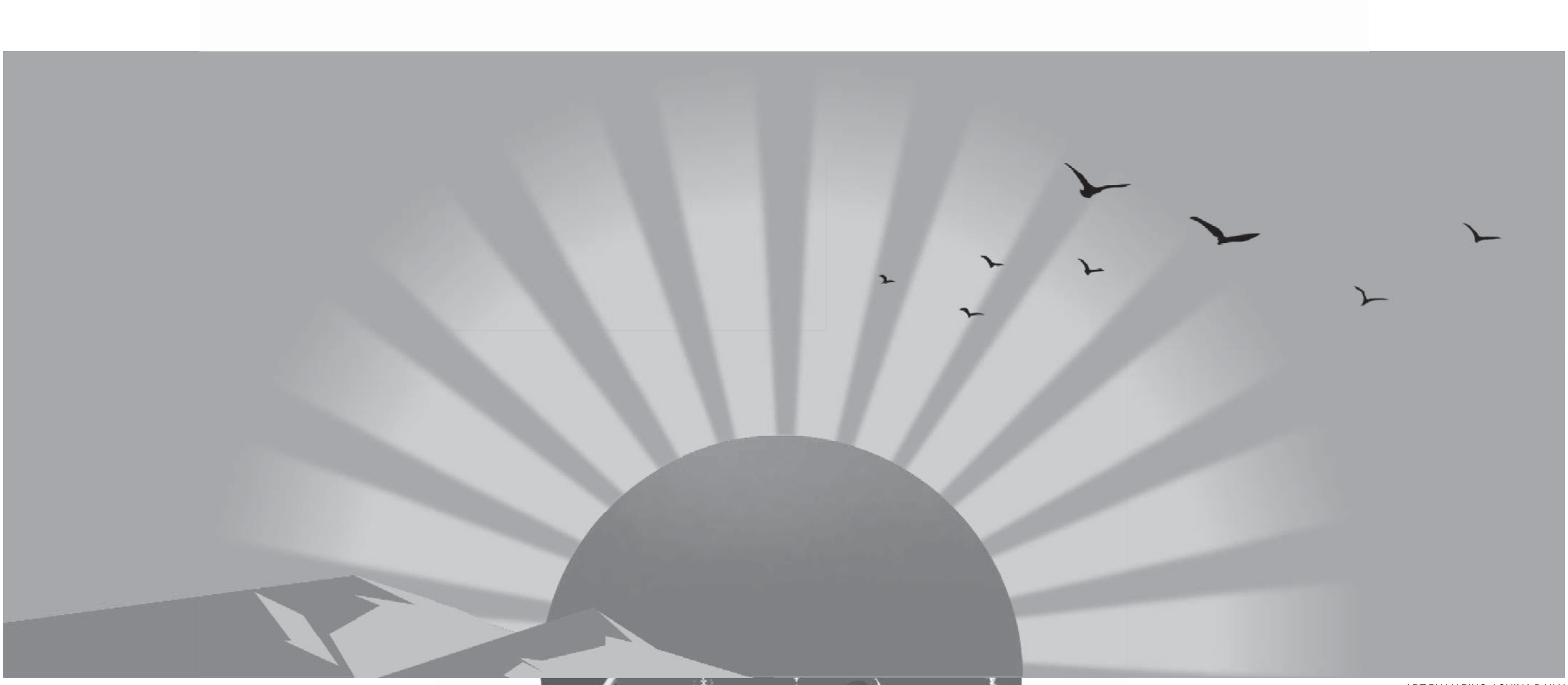
PAGE TWO



ART BY LU PING / CHINA DAILY

Patients: Individuals conquer the virus

From page 1

Two days later, I began to develop symptoms, including a sore throat, cough, lack of appetite, fatigue and a fever of about 38 C. My wife and my father-in-law, who was living with us, were also infected. Seven months pregnant at the time, my wife, 31, experienced fatigue, shortness of breath, loss of taste, and a fever of about 38 C. My father-in-law, 53, had no symptoms.

We were extremely upset and anxious when my wife became infected, but later our worries were slightly eased. Chongqing Public Health Medical Center took good care of us because of my wife's pregnancy — sharing details of a similar case with us and telling us it was highly unlikely that the fetus would be infected.

As we had the same variant of the virus and could not infect each other, we remained in a large comfortable hospital ward together on the ground floor. The local health commission organized a special medical team to treat my wife, as ordinary COVID-19 medication may affect the health of the fetus.

Chongqing Traditional Chinese Medicine Hospital made a mixture that was wiped on my wife's body three times a day. After the treatment, she felt very relaxed and had a good rest.

The director of the isolation hospital, doctors and nurses were very kind to us, bringing us fruit and snacks from home. Five days later, we recovered and were released.

However, after we got home, my wife tested positive again, but this time she had no symptoms. After a week's isolation in a medical observation facility, she tested negative and was allowed to come home.

Later, she tested positive for a third time, but again without symptoms, so we returned to the isolation facility. The doctor said my wife probably had very high viral loads, and that people who have recovered from COVID-19 can continue to spread non-infectious viral fragments for several months after initial infection.

Just 18 days before my wife was due to give birth, she tested negative and was released from the facility.

As a local outbreak that began on Nov 1 originated in our neighborhood, the community was locked down and rated a high-risk area. The community workers were extremely considerate and helped us get to the hospital quickly. On Nov 8, my wife gave birth to a healthy baby boy weighing 3.3 kilograms.

Because of my wife's special circumstances, I had a great deal of communication with the local health commission, center for disease control, the hospital, isolation sites and the community. Overall, our prevention and control measures were rigorous, and although there were some problems with the whole process, the outcome was satisfactory.

I understand that the measures being taken are mainly aimed at protecting senior citizens and children. Although people are inconvenienced for the time being, they fully understand and support the action that has been introduced.

Friends and relatives aware of our situation still communicate with us as usual. I specifically asked my colleagues if they would be worried if I returned to work, but they all said that they believed in the government, and as we had been released from hospital, there was no problem.

The community has kept our details confidential, so local residents don't know about our infections.

My wife and I have no health insurance, and all the COVID-19 treatment we received was free.

Dongdong (an alias), 35, a photographer in Chongqing.

On Nov 9, my community — Qianjin Zhilu Community in Chongqing's Jiulongpo district — received a hospital notification stating that a tube containing samples from up to 10 people in a recent local COVID-19 nucleic acid test batch was found to be positive. My sample was one of those in the tube.

In the next two days, medics completed two more rounds of nucleic acid testing for us at our homes. I began to develop a slight cough, sore throat and a runny nose, but did not have a fever. At midnight on Nov 11, I received a phone call telling me I was a positive COVID-19 case.

On Nov 16, I was sent to a makeshift hospital in the district, which could accommodate thousands of patients. I heard on the news that the hospital was completed in just a few days, and I had no fears about being sent to it.

I think I became infected at a nearby food market, which was reportedly one of the main transmission chains for the recent COVID-19 outbreak in Chongqing. There were some 20 confirmed cases in my neighborhood.

I was diagnosed with a mild infection of the Omicron sub-variant BA.5.2. As my symptoms persisted, doctors at the hospital gave me traditional Chinese medicine.

Meals at the hospital were good, with plenty of choices such as eggs, bread, milk, porridge, soup, fruit and juice. Lunch and dinner normally consisted of two meat dishes and one vegetable dish.

Patients such as myself were able to live normal lives. For example, I saw student patients in the hospital using laptops or tablets for online lessons. Other patients chatted, read news reports or just rested. To make a good recovery, we were told to sleep early at night, and I rested well at the hospital.

Staff members distributed new N95 face masks regularly, and all the services provided at the facility were free.

Late on Nov 29, after I had been in the hospital for 13 days, I was discharged, as I met the requirements that all symptoms must have disappeared for more than three days and two recent nucleic acid tests had to be negative.

I agree with the dynamic zero-COVID policy.

I've had high blood pressure for years, and three years ago, I was diagnosed with Type-2 diabetes. My parents died in the past few years, and I now live alone.

If I had to rely solely on myself after becoming infected, with no doctors to take care of me, I don't think I could have recovered like this. I know there are doubts about the COVID policy, but patients are treated well and make a full recovery.

I don't think it is the right time to totally lift prevention and control measures, as long as they are implemented properly.

The outbreak has not yet disappeared. I miss bustling city life, and want things to get back to normal so that I can earn a living by photographing Chongqing and its people, like I did before.

Wang Bo (an alias), 20, a student at Hebei Normal University, which was badly hit by a COVID-19 outbreak last month.

Due to a cluster of infections at our school, I was transferred to a hotel in Shijiazhuang for quarantine on Nov 12, along with many other students.

On the first day at the hotel, I started to worry that I had become infected, as I began to develop a high fever. I felt terrible.

Service at the hotel was quite good, but I was not allowed to leave the room I shared with my two classmates. The food was also good, but I gradually lost my appetite and sense of taste.

All I could do was rest, drink lots of water and take some traditional Chinese medicine and Western medication provided at the hotel.

I was confirmed positive on Nov 19, when I was transferred to a makeshift hospital in Zhengding county, Shijiazhuang.

After being transferred to the makeshift facility, I started to feel better, as the staff members there organized activities such as square dancing for the patients to exercise together.

In the giant hall that was transformed into the hospital, I saw many infected people — young and old. Most of them were extremely positive about their health and took part in activities enthusiastically.

During my time at the hospital, I gradually relaxed, before receiving a negative nucleic acid test result on Nov 23. Two days later, I was sent back to our university, but completed seven days' quarantine to make sure I had totally got rid of the virus. I plan to go home early this month.

For me, the whole experience was like a sudden dream accompanied by fear and sickness.

But it also gave me an opportunity to see how others who were infected fought the disease and how medical workers and civil servants helped them.

We are all making efforts to conquer the virus. I hope that we succeed as soon as possible so that life can return to normal.

The original strain of the virus had strong virulence, which led to a higher incidence of severe cases and deaths.

Over the past three years, the coronavirus has developed a number of variants, but the dominant Omicron subvariant now has much weaker virulence, which results in weaker symptoms, especially in terms of lung infections, than the strain in 2019.

These findings result from research by Yoshihiro Kawaoka from the University of Tokyo, a renowned virologist and member of the National Academy of Sciences in the United States. The research results were published in the journal Nature in May.

In China, the government always puts people's lives and well-being first, sparing no effort in treating all patients, and making the nation the only major country with the lowest incidence and death toll from COVID-19 worldwide.

Below is the account of one patient infected with the original strain.

Lily Zhang, in her 30s, a finance industry worker, became infected with the original strain of COVID-19 in Wuhan, Hubei province, in late 2019, when the pandemic had just emerged.

After returning from a family gathering in December 2019, my parents became infected, and then I did.

I had a fever, coughing, headache and diarrhea. I stayed at home for about 10 days until I began to have difficulty breathing. At the time, nearly all hospitals were short of beds and were unable to admit large numbers of patients.

With the help of a friend, I contacted a hospital in the suburbs of Wuhan. I nearly had a car accident on the way to the hospital, as I drove there while I still had a fever.

I was hospitalized for two weeks and had CT scans of my lungs a dozen times. The results showed I had a mild case of COVID-19. The doctors gave me antibiotics, hormones and drugs to enhance immunity. I was also given oxygen to help my breathing.

I was discharged from hospital after I stopped coughing and the fever subsided. I was then sent to a *fangcang*, or makeshift hospital, for two weeks' quarantine before being transferred to a hotel for another two weeks of health monitoring.

Before becoming infected, I was not particularly healthy. After my tonsils were removed, I experienced colds from time to time.

I try to avoid getting sick, and along with my family members I take traditional Chinese medicine in the hope that my health will improve.

Epidemic prevention and control measures over the past three years have brought considerable disruption to people's work and lives. I appreciated the concern of many people who asked for lockdowns and other supervisory measures to be lifted.

Although the virus seems to have weakened, those with underlying diseases may still develop severe health problems if they become infected.

Medical resources in China are limited, and many patients are hospitalized with other diseases. If COVID-19 patients become critically ill and flock to hospitals, there will be even fewer medical resources to treat them. For those families with elderly members and children, the younger generation will be under great pressure to take care of them.

Contact the writers at tanyingzi@chinadaily.com.cn

XI'S VISIT

Xi highlights 'profound' friendship

Signed article says visit to usher in new era in China's relations with Arab world

By XU WEI in Riyadh
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China will work with Arab states to carry forward their traditional friendship, jointly build a China-Arab community with a shared future in the new era and keep expanding cooperation in areas such as food, energy, investment, financing and medical services, President Xi Jinping said.

In a signed article published in the Saudi newspaper Al Riyadh on Thursday, Xi said China and Arab states will continue to hold high the banner of noninterference in internal affairs, firmly support each other in safeguarding sovereignty and territorial integrity, and jointly uphold international fairness and justice.

The article was published one day after Xi arrived in Riyadh for the first China-Arab States Summit, the first China-Gulf Cooperation Council Summit and a state visit to Saudi Arabia. It was also Xi's first visit to the Middle Eastern nation since 2016.

"I am coming back to Riyadh, bringing with me profound friendship from the Chinese people," he wrote in the article, adding that the visit will carry forward traditional friendship, and usher in a new era in China's relations with the Arab world, with Arab states of the Gulf, and with Saudi Arabia.

He noted that the Arab people value independence, oppose external interference, stand up to power politics and highhandedness, and always seek to make progress.

He commended the Arab states for firmly supporting the one-China principle and supporting China in safeguarding its core interests.

"Likewise, China supports Arab states in upholding sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity. On issues such as the Palestinian question, China's firm support for Arab states has been consistent and unwavering," the president said.

China has set up 20 Confucius Institutes and two Confucius Classrooms in Arab states, with over 40 Chinese universities teaching Arabic as a major, contributing inexhaustible energy to growing Sino-Arab friendship.

Xi called on the two sides to continue to jointly advocate peace, development, equity, justice, democracy and freedom — the common values of humanity, strive to replace estrangement and the clash of civilizations with exchanges and mutual learning, and promote understanding and affinity between their peoples.

As for ties between China and the Gulf Cooperation Council, Xi noted that China has remained the GCC's largest trading partner and its largest export market of petrochemical products. In 2021, two-way trade exceeded $230 billion, and China's imports of crude oil from GCC countries topped 200 million metric tons.

China will seize the opportunity of the establishment and consolidation of the China-GCC strategic partnership to cement their traditional friendship and deepen mutual trust, he said.

Beijing will work with the GCC to foster a new pattern of multifaceted energy cooperation, accelerate new development in financial and investment cooperation, cultivate new highlights in people-to-people exchanges, and explore new areas of innovation cooperation, he added.

Xi also underlined Beijing's readiness to take the visit as an opportunity to strengthen its comprehensive strategic partnership with Riyadh, calling on both sides to continue to give each other understanding and support, and jointly advocate independence and oppose external interference.

"We will further synergize China's Belt and Road Initiative and Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, deepen and substantiate practical cooperation in all areas, and increase the convergence of interests and people-to-people connectivity between the two countries," he said.

Video screens on buildings in Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia, display slogans in Arabic and Chinese welcoming President Xi Jinping's visit to the Middle East country and celebrating China-Saudi Arabia friendship. WANG DONGZHEN / XINHUA

President's trip fuels hopes for research

By YANG HAN in Riyadh
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Benefits will rain on Saudi Arabia following President Xi Jinping's state visit, many in the Middle East country believe, said experts of an advisory think tank on global energy economics in Riyadh, as they recalled how his last visit in 2016 had put bilateral cooperation on the fast track.

"Cooperation has been there for a while … but since then (2016), we have actually seen more and more (combined efforts in the energy sector)," said Fahad Alajlan, president of the King Abdullah Petroleum Studies and Research Center.

On Jan 20, 2016, President Xi joined King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud to attend the inauguration ceremony of the 70,000-square-meter research complex.

Chen Dongmei, who joined the Riyadh think tank in February 2016 and is now one of its two Chinese researchers, said, "When I came here, I often heard my colleagues talking about the historic moment."

Both countries have embarked on a new journey of transformation, she said, recalling that the Saudi government had announced its Vision 2030 initiative within a few months of Xi's visit that year.

Fahad said the idea of forming the advisory think tank dated to 2007, when there was a global energy crisis. Research on energy was mostly done in the Western world. Now, the center, with a focus on global issues, hopes to provide a different viewpoint, not just of Saudi Arabia, but also of emerging economies in the Global South.

"Having the building inaugurated by the head of the largest oil-producing nation … and the president of the largest consumer nation shows that the balance of power is changing," the president of the center said.

Fahad said he believes Xi's ongoing state visit will further consolidate the relationship between the two countries. He said that China is already the largest trading partner of Saudi Arabia and more bilateral cooperation is expected in key industrial sectors beyond energy, such as in telecommunications.

"Members of the Gulf Cooperation Council have done well in terms of infrastructure. There is a need for continuing collaboration with China, especially in technology improvement, and learning from the Chinese experience," he said.

Fahad said that the center looks forward to forging more cooperation with Chinese institutions to understand better how to align the Belt and Road Initiative and Vision 2030.

On Tuesday, the research center signed a memorandum of understanding with the Economics and Technology Research Institute, which is affiliated with China National Petroleum Corp, to promote cross-regional cooperation in energy research.

Ahmed Alhayfani makes a speech during the final of the first Chinese Bridge, a Chinese language proficiency contest, held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in July. He was the winner of the contest. WANG HAIZHOU / XINHUA

Language helps in building a bridge of understanding

By ZOU SHUO
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Ahmed Alhayfani, an undergraduate student majoring in Chinese at King Abdulaziz University in Saudi Arabia, said learning the language has changed his destiny and he wants to become a diplomat to bring the two countries closer.

Alhayfani won the first Chinese Bridge, a Chinese language proficiency contest for non-Chinese university students, held in Riyadh in July.

Alhayfani credited his teacher for his win. "Word by word, Mr Li helped me correct my pronunciation. For two weeks, we practiced my speech for a couple of hours every day," he said.

The teacher also helped him prepare a lengthy poem for the contest and stayed up all night to edit his introduction video. "I am glad to have chosen to major in Chinese. My teacher has helped me understand the culture of kindness and generosity of the Chinese people. Mr Li has ignited my interest," he said.

Alhayfani added that he hopes to pursue higher studies in China someday and see the country.

Wesal Alqarni, another undergraduate student at King Abdulaziz University, was the runner-up in the contest. She said she chose to major in Chinese because of the close relations between the two countries.

When COVID-19 hit China, Saudi Arabia sent epidemic control equipment, and China returned the favor when there was an outbreak in Saudi Arabia, she said. "Like a family, the two countries fought COVID together."

Alqarni takes a keen interest in Chinese culture. She reads poems in Chinese, which she finds "very beautiful and empowering".

She also watches Chinese movies, sings songs in the language and practices calligraphy and paper-cutting. She wants to become a Chinese language teacher and tell more people about China, so that they can discover "the true beauty of the country".

Moath Alghamdi, a King Abdulaziz University student who came fifth in the competition, is fascinated by Chinese opera. While participating in the contest, he had the chance to learn Yuju Opera. He now spends time reading books and watching videos on Chinese opera.

"Hopefully, I will be able to go to China to pursue my postgraduate studies next year. I'd like to visit the birthplace of Yuju Opera, and learn more about the Chinese opera culture," he said and added that he also wants to perform Chinese opera in front of Saudi audiences in the future.

Bilateral trade expected to grow rapidly

By ZHONG NAN
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China-Saudi Arabia economic and trade ties are expected to experience high-speed growth in the years ahead, market watchers and business leaders said.

Both countries will further strengthen the synergy of the Belt and Road Initiative and the Saudi Vision 2030, as well as reinforce pragmatic cooperation on energy, infrastructure and green and high-tech development, they said.

Launched by the Saudi government in 2016, Saudi Vision 2030 is an economic and social reform blueprint designed to open the kingdom up to the world, and boost communication and coordination on regional and international affairs.

Given the opportunities provided by the BRI and Saudi Vision 2030, the potential for business cooperation between China and Saudi Arabia will be unleashed in areas such as 5G, trade in services, production of new energy vehicles and smart-city development, said Sun Fuquan, vice-president of the Chinese Academy of Science and Technology for Development.

These technologies are developing quickly and are reaching maturity in China, he said, adding that China's technology solutions and related service projects will help contribute to Saudi Arabia's supply chain development and aid its ambition of becoming an industrial powerhouse.

While oil is at the heart of trade between China and Saudi Arabia, the total value of bilateral trade soared 37.4 percent year-on-year to $97.26 billion in the first 10 months of the year, data from China's General Administration of Customs shows.

In addition to crude oil, petrochemicals, fertilizer and other products, Saudi Arabia exports to China a variety of goods such as metallic ore, aquatic products, marble, olive oil, and sesame and dairy products.

China mainly ships construction machinery, vessels, manufacturing equipment, steel, textiles, furniture, computers, smartphones, garments and household appliances to Saudi Arabia. Chinese-made electric passenger vehicles have also become popular in the Middle Eastern country.

Since the launch of Saudi Vision 2030, the country's economy has significantly diversified, with manufacturing, tourism, finance, mining, education, healthcare and other sectors embracing new growth opportunities, said Mohammed Alajlan, chairman of the Saudi Chinese Business Council.

"China has advanced technologies, services and products in emerging fields such as AI, big data, biotech, fintech and automation," he said. "Chinese companies have brought practical technology solutions to Saudi Arabia and the Middle East region. There are already numerous win-win results in various sectors between China and Saudi Arabia, and there will be more in the future."

Popular Chinese TV dramas aired in Arab states

By DENG ZHANGYU
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A heartwarming story about a group of villagers building a town from scratch or a comedy that follows the fortunes of three high school seniors whose families prepare them for a prestigious college exam — the entertainment quotient just doubled for television audiences in Arab states, thanks to China.

In the spirit of camaraderie between China and the Middle East, popular Chinese TV dramas are now being broadcast in the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and elsewhere.

Last week, a Chinese TV section was launched at the Dubai-based Middle East Broadcasting Center, which will let audiences in Arab states, including Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt, watch hit Chinese dramas such as *Minning Town* and *A Little Reunion*. Both TV dramas are said to be earning good reviews.

Le Yucheng, deputy head of National Radio and Television Administration, said China is willing to cooperate with Arab states to produce and broadcast more such television programs.

"We would like to boost cultural communication and promote shared values, including peaceful development and justice," said Le in a meeting on "TV Cooperation Between China and Arab States" in Beijing on Nov 21.

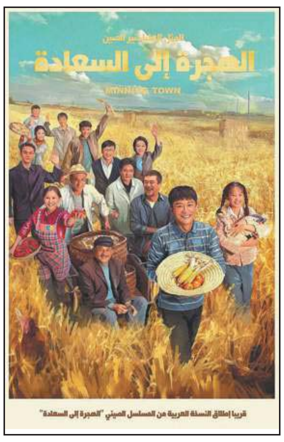
Sabrina Azouni, a senior official from MBC Group, a leading media organization in the Middle East and North Africa, said that they have great expectations in terms of the popularity of these Chinese TV dramas in the region and will promote these on their 20-plus channels.

"We welcome more Chinese TV production companies and platforms to cooperate with us in the future," Azouni added.

Aside from MBC Group, China-Arab TV, the only Sino-Arab satellite television channel in the Middle East, will air these popular Chinese TV dramas in Arabic in 22 nations.

At the TV cooperation meeting in Beijing, the UAE's Ambassador to China Ali Obaid Al Dhaheri said that television series, short videos and digital media platforms help the youth in China and Arab states to stay connected. He hoped for more cultural exchanges with China.

"I think young people will shoulder this mission. I encourage them to share stories with each other via videos," the ambassador said.



An Arabic poster promotes a popular Chinese TV series *Minning Town*. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

CHINA

Chongqing, Tianjin and other places see new Party chiefs

By **TAN YINGZI** in Chongqing and **CAO YIN** in Beijing

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China has decided that Chen Min'er no longer concurrently serves as secretary, standing committee member and member of the CPC Chongqing Municipal Committee, and that Yuan Jiajun concurrently serves as member, standing committee member and secretary of the CPC Chongqing Municipal Committee, Xinhua News Agency reported on Thursday.

Li Hongzhong no longer concurrently serves as secretary, standing committee member and member of the CPC Tianjin Municipal Committee. Chen concurrently serves as member, standing committee member and secretary of the CPC Tianjin Municipal Committee.

Chen, 62, is from Zhuji, Zhejiang province. He began his first job in August 1981 and joined the Communist Party of China in September 1982. He received a graduate education at the Central Party School. He became the Party chief of Chongqing in 2017. Chen is currently a member of the CPC Central Committee Political Bureau.

Li, 66, is from Changle, Shandong province. He began his first job in August 1975 and joined the CPC in December 1976. Li graduated from the department of history at Jilin University where he completed an undergraduate program. He holds a professional title of economist. He is currently a member of the CPC Central Committee Political Bureau.

Yuan, 60, a native of Jilin province, became the Party chief of Zhejiang in August 2020. He is now a member of the CPC Central Committee Political Bureau. He graduated from Beihang University in 1984 majoring in solid mechanics at the department of aircraft design and applied mechanics.

Chongqing in Southwest China became the country's fourth municipality in 1997 after Beijing, Shanghai and Tianjin.

Covering 82,402 square kilometers and with a population of over 32 million, it is the largest of the four.

Located on the upper reaches of the Yangtze River, the city boasts key geographic advantages as a strategic pivot in the national development program for western regions, as well as a connecting point for the Belt and Road Initiative and the Yangtze River Economic Belt.

The municipality is one of the major economic centers in China, with a GDP in excess of 2 trillion yuan ($280 billion) in the first three quarters of this year.

New Party chiefs for three provinces were also unveiled on Wednesday.

The CPC Central Committee has recently decided that Yuan Jiajun will no longer concurrently serve as secretary of the CPC Zhejiang Provincial Committee, appointing Yi Lianhong to serve in the position instead.

Before Yi came to Zhejiang, the 63-year-old native from Hunan province had served as secretary of the CPC Jiangxi Provincial Committee.

Under the decision, Yin Hong has replaced Yi as the Party chief of Jiangxi, and Hu Changsheng has replaced Yin as secretary of the CPC Gansu Provincial Committee.

Yin, 59, from Zhejiang, began his first job in Shanghai in 1985, and in the following 30 years he had various work posts in the metropolis. Before he came to Jiangxi, he had served as Party chief of Gansu.

Hu, 59, from Jiangxi, had worked in Sichuan province for about 30 years. Before the new position in Gansu, he served as deputy secretary of the CPC Heilongjiang Provincial Committee.

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Above: Travelers enter a terminal at Beijing Capital International Airport to take flights on Thursday as some restrictions for travel were eased. CUI JUN / FOR CHINA DAILY
Left: Workers dismantle an area for nucleic acid testing at Shanghai Railway Station on Thursday. CHEN MENGZE / FOR CHINA DAILY

Guidelines issued to help patients recover

Documents detail rules for quarantine, roles of neighborhoods and hospitals

By **LI LEI**
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Health authorities on Thursday issued two guidelines in tandem to help COVID-19 patients with mild symptoms recover at home and to properly monitor their health with test kits.

The documents' rollout came a day after China announced more adjustments of COVID-19 control policies, such as allowing for positive cases to isolate at home, stopping mass testing campaigns and removing limits for buying cold and fever medications.

Released by the State Council's Joint Prevention and Control Mechanism, the country's COVID-19 control task force, the guidelines allowed the majority of new COVID-19 patients to stay at home, except for those with serious heart, liver, lung and brain illnesses that necessitate hospitalization.

To reduce cross-infections, the rules recommended separate rooms for homebound patients, who are encouraged to take recommended drugs based on their symptoms, and report their body temperature regularly to neighborhood authorities. Tissues, surgical masks, single-use gloves, sanitizers and a trash can with a lid are listed among the necessities for them.

To terminate isolation after recovery, people need to test negative using an antigen test kit before contacting the neighborhood authorities for formal nucleic acid tests. The isolation wraps up after test results return negative for two consecutive days.

Home isolation may be risky for vulnerable groups.

To address the problem, neighborhood authorities and grassroots clinics were tasked with keeping an eye on seniors who live alone, pregnant women or people who need blood dialysis, and advising them on medications and test kits.

The rules suggest COVID-19 patients should not venture out of their homes.

However, those suffering worsening breathing difficulties, persistent fever or other symptoms are allowed to leave isolation for treatment, preferably by calling for an ambulance or driving to hospitals. Public transportation should be avoided.

Neighborhood authorities are also obligated to help those with worsening conditions be hospitalized. Hospitals cannot use any excuse to refuse admitting such patients, the rules said.

The rules urged local governments to step up the production of test kits and supervision over their dealers, and asked construction sites, colleges and large corporations to prepare test kits in advance in case of cluster infections.

Local health departments will also develop software so that results of home-executed tests can be reported.

Wang Guiqiang, an epidemiologist at Peking University First Hospital, told a news conference on Thursday that separate rooms are essential for home isolation to prevent the disease from spreading further.

"If there is only one room, and patients have to live together with bedridden elderly with basic diseases, home isolation is not recommended," he said.

The guidelines are part of the precautions taken by health authorities against a potential surge of COVID-19 patients after many pandemic restrictions — such as nucleic acid test proofs for travel and entering public venues — were lifted.

Keeping as many as mild and asymptomatic cases at home can help save hospital beds for critically ill patients, usually unvaccinated older adults, and keep other patients' medical plans from being disrupted by Omicron outbreaks at hospitals, experts and officials suggested.

Mild cases allowed to isolate at home

By **WANG XIAOYU**
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The National Health Commission released a COVID-19 triage protocol on Wednesday in an effort to deliver timely treatment for severe and high-risk patients, reduce rates of severe cases and death, while guaranteeing regular medical services.

Asymptomatic and mild cases can isolate at home and take oral medicines when necessary. For elderly patients with limited mobility, home-based therapy coupled with door-to-door services provided by medical staff is recommended, said the guideline released on the commission's website.

Moderate cases with high-risk factors such as old age and severe preexisting illnesses who are in stable condition should be transferred to COVID-19-designated hospitals.

Guo Yanhong, director of the commission's health emergency response department, said during a news conference on Thursday that because the majority of infected patients only need to isolate at home and take recommended pills, health clinics and hospitals are required to expand online consultation services, while stocking up on regular medications and antigen tests to meet demand.

According to the protocol, severe and critical cases with pneumonia symptoms and infected patients on dialysis should be transferred to high-level designated hospitals.

Other serious COVID-19 cases threatened by preexisting illnesses should be transferred to major comprehensive hospitals in the region.

"Designated hospitals should be multidisciplinary, and be equipped with sufficient and experienced medical staff to ensure high-quality treatment," she said.

In Beijing, an increasing number of hospitals have become COVID-19-designated hospitals in the past few days, including at least two major hospitals in the city's most populous Chaoyang district.

As influenza and other respiratory diseases tend to strike harder in winter, Guo added that fever clinics are required to increase capacity and should not be suspended arbitrarily.

The protocol also asked local communities to survey the conditions of vulnerable groups in their jurisdictions. Major hospitals are also urged to step up the construction of intensive care units and medical staff.

In another notice released on Wednesday, the commission reiterated that medical institutions across China must not reject patients without negative nucleic acid testing results taken within 48 hours and should allocate relatively isolated areas to receive infected cases.

The notice is aimed at optimizing hospital management procedures and improving medical services amid continuing threats of the COVID-19 disease, the commission said.

At outpatient facilities, hospitals are required to check test results taken within 48 hours for all visitors and handle those with negative results and those with positive results in separate, designated areas.

Emergency care departments must not delay treatment due to the lack of test results. Patients in need of emergency care without a test result should be able to access treatment at a buffer zone while taking an antigen and a nucleic acid test simultaneously.

For inpatient facilities, hospitals should screen hospitalized patients for the virus before admitting them.

Monitoring of hospitalized patients who are aged 65 and above, unvaccinated or suffering severe chronic diseases should be strengthened.

HK affirms 42 candidates for top legislature election

By **OASIS HU** in Hong Kong
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Forty-two candidates have been confirmed as qualified to run for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region's deputies to the nation's top legislature. The election, which will pick 36 new deputies, is scheduled to take place on Dec 15.

The candidates were approved at the second presidium meeting of the Conference for Electing Deputies of the Hong Kong SAR to the 14th National People's Congress on Thursday.

During the meeting, a 19-member presidium with Hong Kong Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu as the chairperson reviewed the nomination forms submitted by 42 applicants within the nomination period from Nov 23 to Nov 30.

All the applicants met the candidacy requirements, which included getting nominations from over 15 electoral conference members. If successfully elected as the HKSAR's NPC deputies, they will serve a term of five years.

These candidates include social leaders from various sectors, such as Stanley Ng Chau-pei, president of the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions, Chan Yung, chairman of the New Territories Association of Societies, veteran cultural and art expert Ma Fung-kwok, and legal pundits Chan Man-ki and Leung Mei-fun.

Earlier on Wednesday, Macao's NPC deputy election conference announced that 15 candidates were qualified to run for the deputy election on Dec 12.

An 11-member presidium chaired by Macao Chief Executive Ho Iat-seng reviewed the nomination forms submitted by 16 applicants within Macao's nomination period, which ran from Nov 22 to Nov 28.

Among the 15 candidates, nine are current Macao NPC deputies. Others include members of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference as well as leaders in other sectors.

The NPC is the highest organ of State power in China. It is composed of NPC deputies who are elected from 35 electoral units according to the law, including people's congresses of provinces, autonomous regions, municipalities directly under the central government, the deputy election council of the HKSAR and Macao SAR, and the Taiwan compatriots' consultation election council. Each congress is elected for a term of five years.

Growth: China to strengthen macro policy coordination

From page 1

Li told Georgieva that China will continue to strengthen macro policy coordination with all parties, including the IMF, to tackle debt, climate change and other global challenges to make greater contributions to promoting global economic recovery and sustainable development.

China will implement the Debt Service Suspension Initiative of the Group of 20 in all respects and will take part in and work with relevant G20 members to formulate fair and equitable debt-restructuring plans, he said.

Li said that the country will advance the opening-up of its services sector on the basis of the full opening of its manufacturing sector.

The IMF chief said she believed that China's recalibration of its COVID response policies will help boost economic growth. The IMF is ready to work closely with China to prevent fragmentation of the world economy and jointly respond to common challenges, she said.

When meeting with Okonjo-Iweala, Li said that China is ready to deepen cooperation with the WTO and work with all parties to promote WTO reform in the right direction and toward balanced and development-oriented results.

As the largest developing country in the world, China will adhere to the principle of balancing rights and obligations at the WTO and shoulder its responsibilities consistent with the level and capacity of its economic development, he said.

In his talks with Cormann, the premier stressed the need for greater international solidarity and cooperation under the current circumstances.

It is hoped that the OECD will leverage its role as a bridge and encourage countries to focus on common interests, enhance dialogue and cooperation, work together to tackle global challenges and pursue mutual benefits and win-win outcomes, he said.

Tasty harvest

Farmers harvest strawberries at an agricultural base in Qingdao, Shandong province, on Thursday. Local authorities have promoted new planting techniques and rural tourism in recent years to increase farmers' incomes. LIANG XIAOPENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Orders: Other provinces have taken similar steps

From page 1

Furthermore, starting on Friday, over 200 representatives of foreign-trade companies and governments at different levels in Suzhou, Jiangsu province, will visit more than 15 Fortune Global 500 companies in France and Germany for the first time in three years.

"All the foreign-trade companies said that they cannot wait to communicate with their clients," said Sun Jianjiang, director of Suzhou's bureau of commerce.

The team will participate in over 230 activities in the two countries, including visiting multinational firms, attending investment promotions and meeting with financial institutions and chambers of commerce.

Suzhou currently has more than 660 German-invested companies, and its trade with Germany totaled $14.8 billion in 2021, up 33.9 percent year-on-year and accounting for more than 6 percent of China's total trade with the nation.

The city also has more than 130 French-invested companies. Suzhou's trade with France — which reached $4.42 billion last year, a 22.1 percent year-on-year increase — accounts for more than 5 percent of China's total with the country.

Nationwide, authorities in such provinces as Sichuan, Guangdong and Fujian have taken similar steps. As China continues to optimize its COVID-19 policies, more places are expected to join the ranks to ramp up foreign trade and economic development.

Qi Xiao and Fang Xiaoying contributed to this story.

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Strengthening economic partnership in new era

Bilateral trade surges and key projects set to boost supply chain development

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Saudi Arabia and China will see reinforced economic cooperation and stronger trade ties in the years ahead, according to market watchers and business leaders from both countries.

The optimistic outlook is supported by two countries' shared economic interests and their efforts to enhance synergy between the Belt and Road Initiative and Saudi Vision 2030.

Saudi Vision 2030 is a unique transformative economic and social reform blueprint that is opening Saudi Arabia up to the world. It plans to boost the country' communication and coordination in regional and international affairs.

While the oil trade lies at the heart of business ties between China and Saudi Arabia, the Middle East country's desire to upgrade its infrastructure, service and manufacturing facilities such as roads, airports, oil tankers, new energy-related projects, offshore engineering equipment and container ports, has brought more opportunities for Chinese project contractors and manufacturers, said Zhang Yuxin, a researcher at the Institute of Industrial Economics at the Beijing-based Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

Zhang said Saudi companies also want to jointly explore third-party markets with China to reinforce their commercial connection with many countries and regions via greater development and BRI cooperation.

Thanks to their complementary trade structure and close economic ties, the two countries saw their trade soar 37.4 percent year-on-year to $97.26 billion between January and October 2022, data from China's General Administration of Customs show.

China mainly ships construction machinery, vessels, manufacturing equipment, steel, textiles, furniture, computers, smartphones, garments and household appliances to Saudi Arabia. Chinese-made electric passenger vehicles have also become popular in the country.

In addition to crude oil, petrochemicals, fertilizer and other products, Saudi Arabian exports to China include a variety of goods such as metallic ore, aquatic products, marble, olive oil, sesame and dairy products.

The potential for trade cooperation between China and countries involved in the BRI is being continually unleashed, serving as a new engine that propels China's development of foreign trade and outbound direct investment, especially in areas such as 5G, autonomous driving, new energy vehicle production and smart city development, according to Sun Fuquan, vice-president of the Chinese Academy of Science and Technology for Development in Beijing.

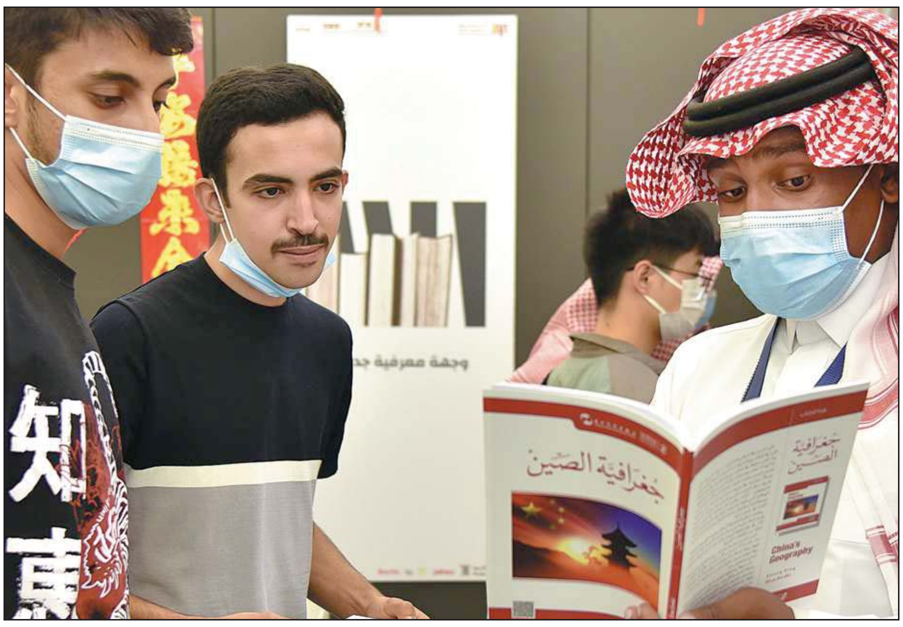
These technologies are developing quickly and reaching their maturity in China, Sun said, adding that China's technology solutions and related service projects will greatly contribute to the Arab country's industrial powerhouse ambitions and supply chain development.

To reach their goals for both economic and sustainable growth, Saudi Arabia and many oil and natural gas-rich Middle East countries need the investment and technical assistance of foreign countries such as China and the United States in the oil and gas industries.

The foreign investment is needed due to strong demand for skills and high-tech expertise, said Lin Boqiang, head of the China Institute for Studies in Energy Policy at Xiamen University in Fujian province.

Mohammed Alajlan, chairman of the Riyadh and Shanghai-based Saudi-Chinese Business Council, said that since Saudi Vision 2030 was presented by Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud in 2016, the country's economy has significantly diversified. Local manufacturing, tourism, finance, mining, education, healthcare and other sectors are embracing new development opportunities.

To attract more global capital, the Saudi government has introduced a series of favorable policies and measures, improved its investment environment, and added investment in infrastructure.



An exhibitor introduces a book on China's geography at the Riyadh International Book Fair in 2021. WANG HAIZHOU / XINHUA

> We have seen many Chinese companies bring practical technology solutions to Saudi Arabia and the Middle East region by localizing their know-how to better align with the markets. There are already numerous win-win results in different sectors between China and Saudi Arabia and there will be many more in the future."
>
> **Mohammed Alajlan**, chairman of the Riyadh and Shanghai-based Saudi-Chinese Business Council

Besides building new roads, expanding airports and upgrading port facilities, it has streamlined electrical connections and installation projects.

Geographic information systems have been adopted to meet the new demands for power connection, increasing the accessibility of electric power, according to the information released by the council.

"China has advanced technologies, services and products in emerging fields such as AI, big data, biotech, fintech and automation," he said. "We have seen many Chinese companies bring practical technology solutions to Saudi Arabia and the Middle East region by localizing their know-how to better align with the markets. There are already numerous win-win results in different sectors between China and Saudi Arabia and there will be many more in the future."

Alajlan, who is also vice-chairman of Ajlan & Bros Holding Group, or ABHG, a Saudi Arabia-based conglomerate, said the company's business in China has expanded from exporting garments and textiles from China to cooperating with Chinese companies for growth opportunities in a wide range of sectors, including financial services, healthcare, high-end consumer goods manufacturing, technology, education, logistics and tourism.

Since its establishment, ABHG has doubled the size of its investment team in China and set up a number of branches in cities across the country, including Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen.

While building big-ticket projects such as roads, bridges and railways to improve the lives of people in Saudi Arabia, China Harbour Engineering, or CHEC, a marine engineering project specialist and a subsidiary of State-owned China Communications Construction, is paying careful attention to protecting the natural environment in the country's Red Sea Project.

As a major project announced by the Saudi government in 2017, the Red Sea Project is a new tourism hub being developed on the western coast of the country. It's aimed at making cities such as Umluj global tourism destinations.

Upon its proposed completion in 2030, the Red Sea island destination will include up to 8,000 hotel rooms across 22 islands and six inland sites, according to information released by project developer Red Sea Development Co.

CHEC has taken part in the project, including being engaged in island environmental improvement, piling and foundation projects for hotels, and channel dredging.

"CHEC adheres to the new development concept, and deeply cultivates in every employee the idea of promoting the construction of ecological civilization and harmonious coexistence between humans and nature," said Yang Zhiyuan, general manager of the CHEC Middle East Regional Management Center.

CHEC regards implementing environmental protection measures and protecting the unique marine ecosystem of the Red Sea as an important task, Yang said, adding the Red Sea is home to diverse and dense coral reefs. About 70 coral species are known to be within the construction area of the project, providing habitats for tens of thousands of fish and invertebrates that are essential for maintaining biodiversity.

The CHEC team there has set up two protective curtains around the construction islands to minimize the environmental effects, Yang said. The area within 10 meters of the coral reef has been set aside as a coral buffer reserve. No-navigation and no-anchoring zones have been set up in areas where there are coral reefs to prevent direct damage to the seabed and the ocean.

ACWA Power: Platform for Saudi-China long-term renewable collaboration

By YUAN SHENGGAO

China and Saudi Arabia have long enjoyed robust relations. Since 1990, when the Chinese and Saudi governments established official diplomatic ties, both sides have embraced a host of collaboration opportunities and worked together to explore the full potential of trade, investment, and knowledge economy projects.

China is Saudi Arabia's largest trading partner and export market, with the former country making huge investments in the kingdom, including those pertaining to energy. China and Saudi Arabia have acknowledged the necessity of addressing abatement imperatives and accelerating progression toward a carbon-free future.

Leading energy transition

ACWA Power is a leading developer, investor and operator of power generation, water desalination and green hydrogen plants across the world. With operations in 13 countries across the Middle East, Africa, Central and Southeast Asia, ACWA Power's portfolio comprises 67 projects in operation, advanced development, or construction with a 42.7 gigawatt power capacity and 6.2 million cubic meters of daily seawater desalination capacity. The Chinese investment, and support for contractors and suppliers has proven instrumental in the successful initiation and development of large-scale energy and water desalination projects across geographies.

Established in 2004, ACWA Power's mission is to deliver power and water reliably and responsibly at low costs. The Saudi state-owned national champion is leading the energy transition through transformative solutions in solar, wind, water, battery storage and green hydrogen.

Renewable projects account for 37.6 percent of the company's portfolio, with low-carbon technologies constituting more than 70 percent of the portfolio. Out of the new project developments, more than 80 percent are renewable and involve water development.

Saudi-China collaboration

ACWA Power's collaboration with China started in 2009 when the ACWA Power China office opened in Beijing. ACWA Power has since established strategic relationships with Chinese-leading EPC contractors, equipment suppliers, financing institutions and investment partners, who are participating in 47 projects across 12 countries. With professional and multidisciplined local teams in China, ACWA Power prides itself on identifying and onboarding like-minded Chinese companies to partner with for business development, procurement, investment, financing, and project execution purposes. Over the past 13 years, ACWA Power has reached around $10 billion in collaboration with Chinese investors and financiers, and $33 billion with Chinese EPC and suppliers, covering multiple landmark renewable and seawater desalination projects across the world.

Among the strategic investment partners, it is worth noting that ACWA Power and China's Silk Road Fund have jointly invested in ACWA Power Renewable Energy Holding Company, in which ACWA Power holds a 51 percent stake and the remaining 49 percent is held by the Silk Road Fund. ACWA Power Renewable Holding owns eight existing projects across five different Belt and Road Initiative countries. ACWA Power plans to rapidly grow this renewable holding company into one of the largest Saudi Arabia-China renewable investment platforms, introduce more strategic co-investors, and seek to explore an IPO of this company during the next three years. A slew of projects highlight the influence and effect that Chinese partners have had on ACWA Power's renewable energy expansion. China's Silk Road Fund is a co-investor in the fourth phase of the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Solar Park, the largest concentrated solar power project in the world, in which ACWA Power is a lead developer.

Another example is China's SPIC Huanghe Hydropower Development Co. In February, ACWA Power achieved a financial closing for the $1.3 billion senior debt facilities for the Red Sea integrated smart energy city project. In relation to the collaboration with Chinese-leading EPC contractors and suppliers, ACWA Power has awarded more than $33 billion of construction contracts to Chinese EPC partners since 2009. Those partners include Power China, Energy China, Shanghai Electric, Harbin and Dongfang and others. ACWA Power has also established strategic partnerships with leading Chinese suppliers in solar PV, wind and battery storage areas, including Longji, Jinko, JA Solar, Jolywood, Sungrow, Huawei, Arctech, Envision and others.

This section is sponsored by ACWA Power.

Great Wall Motor accelerates growth

By LI FUSHENG
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Saudi Arabia, the largest country in the Middle East, is emerging as a new engine of Chinese carmaker Great Wall Motor's globalization strategy.

In July, the company, China's largest pickup and SUV maker, chose Saudi Arabia as the first international market for its Tank marque and launched its off-roader Tank 300 in the capital city of Riyadh.

The event was held as the company's accumulated overseas sales hit 1 million units.

Standing at this new starting point, the Tank brand is the latest move in the carmaker's high-quality implementation of its globalization strategy and its determination to explore the international market.

The Tank marque, developed in China for the global market, has established a leading position among similar products in the Chinese market.

The Middle East was chosen as the first stop in the overseas markets because of its vast potential in the off-road vehicle segment, said the carmaker.

Great Wall Motor started its globalization strategy 20 years ago, with vehicles shipped first to the Middle East.

Now it is in that same region that the carmaker witnessed its 1 millionth vehicle sold overseas.

Saudi Arabia is one of the pivotal markets involved in the Belt and Road Initiative and is a pillar in the company's strategy to explore the Middle East and even the global market, said Great Wall Motor.

Great Wall Motor started to work with local dealers in Saudi Arabia in 2017, and both parties have worked together since to reshape Saudi users' impression of Chinese automotive brands.

The carmaker now holds a 5 percent market share in both the SUV and the pickup segment in the country, with the compound sales growth rate reaching 126 percent from 2018 to 2021.

Thanks to its research and development efforts and high-quality products, the carmaker is helping to get rid of the stereotype of Chinese brands in the eyes of local people. Over the past years, Great Wall Motor has launched several models in Saudi Arabia that have won their hearts.

The first of them is the Poer. The powerful, smart yet comfortable pickup can meet local people's demands in different situations ranging from family trips to off-road driving and daily commutes.

The Haval Dargo, which was unveiled at the 2021 Jeddah motor show, was named as the Best New Arrival by the organizers, thanks to its muscular yet fashionable design and cutting-edge technological features.

The Good Cat, from Great Wall Motor's Ora marque, was also unveiled at the 2021 Jeddah motor show, as its first electric vehicle in Saudi Arabia.

It features super-fast-charging and smart control systems, which are expected to enable the model to contribute to the country's efforts to shift toward clean transportation.

The all-new Tank marque is creating a new SUV segment, balancing off-road capabilities with urban scenarios. Embracing the spirit of innovation, the carmaker vows to build the marque with its users around the world.

Parker Shi, vice-president of Great Wall Motor Global, said: "The Middle East is a market with a lot of potential for Chinese brands. We attach great importance to this market.

"We will speed up efforts to explore the market by introducing more competitive models and innovative services to increase the Chinese brands' influence in the region."

The Middle East is emerging as a new engine of its efforts to deepen its globalization strategy, said the carmaker. It said it will take the region as a hub for its expansion into North Africa and Europe to lay a solid foundation for its overseas operations.

Saudi Arabia is a pillar in.Great Wall Motor's strategy to explore the Middle East. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

This section is sponsored by Great Wall Motor.

Greater cooperation enhances business ties

Wide-reaching partnership sees both countries entering a new era of win-win economic development

By YUAN SHENGGAO
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Closer China-Saudi Arabia business cooperation will strongly motivate companies to deploy financial resources, talent and technology solutions in each other's markets in the long run, as well as adding fresh growth momentum to the regional and global economy, said business leaders and analysts.

While deepening mutual political trust, complementing trade and expanding the convergence of interests, China and Saudi Arabia are leveraging their comparative strengths and widening market access to each other, they said.

China has been keen to assist the Middle East country in charting a new path of economic diversification and synergize the Belt and Road Initiative, after the Saudi government unveiled the Saudi Vision 2030 in 2016. The Arab country's strategic framework aims to cut dependence on oil and transform the kingdom into a leading industrial powerhouse and global trading and logistics hub, said Xu Hongcai, deputy director of the economic policy commission with the China Association of Policy Science in Beijing.

For instance, King Abdulaziz Port in Dammam, Saudi Arabia, was included in the Gulf China Service in December of 2021, which is a weekly service connecting central and southern China to the Gulf region — launched by Singapore's Pacific International Lines — in November last year.

The move, aimed at enhancing the competitiveness of the port and increasing trade between the two countries, has effectively shored up maritime links, and generated more investment and cooperative opportunities with other economies related to the BRI, Xu noted.

With both China and Saudi Arabia entering a new era of innovation and green growth, China's Kunlun Digital Technology and eWTP Arabia Capital signed a memorandum of understanding in Riyadh to promote the digital transformation of the Middle East and North Africa in early November. Under the agreement, their first project will be launched in Saudi Arabia.

A customer goes shopping at Huawei's flagship outlet in Riyadh, capital of Saudi Arabia, on Feb 2.
WANG HAIZHOU / XINHUA

Affiliated with State-owned China National Petroleum, Kunlun Digital is an information technology solution provider with more than 20 years of experience in the petroleum and gas industry.

The eWTPA is a venture fund backed by the sovereign wealth fund of Saudi Arabia — the Public Investment Fund.

Based on Kunlun Digital and eWTPA's industrial expertise and comprehensive research on the region, the joint venture is expected to grow its revenue to $2 billion within the next decade.

The joint venture will utilize both Kunlun Digital's technological capabilities and eWTPA's resourceful network in the Middle East and North Africa to import and localize cutting-edge technical solutions and enable technological upgrading in Saudi Arabia's energy infrastructure and production process in its oilfields.

In another sign of broadening strategic relations, the Saudi Digital Academy signed an MoU with Shenzhen, Guangdong province-based tech group Huawei Technologies in February. The consent is intended to sponsor and develop 8,000 local technology talents and will contribute to Riyadh's digital transformation under the Saudi Vision 2030. The Chinese company would also cultivate 100 Saudi trainers on technologies including artificial intelligence, cloud computing, cybersecurity and 5G communications to boost the country's competitiveness.

Eager to further compete with their global rivals, Chinese phone maker Vivo also unveiled two 5G smartphones in Riyadh in September.

At its first offline launch of new products in the kingdom, Vivo presented the latest additions to its 5G smartphones — V25 and V25 Pro, which feature better photographic capabilities.

Simon Hu, general manager of Vivo in Saudi Arabia, said over the past three years, Vivo has expanded into nine regional markets, including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar, becoming the fastest growing smartphone brand in the region.

By the end of 2021, the Chinese smartphone manufacturer saw a year-on-year sales growth of 272 percent in Saudi Arabia, he added.

As the complex and changing international situation has created many destabilizing factors for the oil market, China and Saudi Arabia, as the world's major energy consumer and producer, should further strengthen energy cooperation, maintain international oil market stability and jointly cope with risks and challenges, said Zhao Ping, deputy head of the Academy of China Council for the Promotion of International Trade in Beijing.

Saudi Arabian Oil, also known as Aramco, a Dhahran, Saudi Arabia-based multinational petroleum and natural gas company, said that its major integrated refinery and petrochemical complex in Northeast China through a joint venture will further expand its market presence in China.

The project, located in Panjin, Liaoning province, presents an opportunity for Aramco to supply up to 210,000 barrels of crude oil feedstock per day to the complex after it begins operation in 2024, the company announced in a statement in March.

It will combine a 300,000 barrels-per-day refinery capacity and an ethylene-based steam cracker, it said.

This is the latest major move by Aramco to expand its presence in China, after it announced in March an MoU with China Petroleum and Chemical Corp, or Sinopec, the world's largest refiner by volume, for potential downstream collaboration in the country.

The two sides will also support the Fujian Refining and Petrochemical in conducting a feasibility study into the optimization and expansion of capacity, said the statement.

Zhang Yongjun, a researcher at Beijing-based China Center for International Economic Exchanges, said it is practical for oil majors across the world to strengthen cooperation and extend their business chain to jointly cope with potential risks given the backdrop of surging oil prices and increasing financial pressure.

The cooperation of global oil companies in both upstream and downstream sectors will better prepare them against such risks, said Luo Zuoxian, head of intelligence and research at the Sinopec Economics and Development Research Institute.

Market fluctuations will lead to more cooperation between countries that are rich in resources and big energy consumers, he said. The cooperation is mutually beneficial in refining and engineering services as well as science and technology research and development, he added.

"China is a cornerstone of our downstream expansion strategy in Asia and an increasingly significant driver of global chemical demand," said Mohammed Al Qahtani, Aramco senior vice-president of downstream products.

Apart from developing oil energy-related projects in Saudi Arabia and the Middle East region, China Energy Engineering Group, the Beijing-headquartered State-owned enterprise, started to build facilitating facilities of the 2.6-gigawatt Al Shuaibah photovoltaic project in Saudi Arabia in mid-November.

Located in the Al Shuaibah region of Jeddah, Mecca province, the project will be equipped with advanced PV modules. It is expected to be the largest individual PV project in the Middle East and North Africa. It is able to provide 3,000 jobs for residents of the area.

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Partnering with Chinese companies to tap opportunities in new era

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Ajlan & Bros Holding Group, a leading diversified global private conglomerate headquartered in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, has signed a record number of joint venture agreements and memorandums of understanding this year with top Chinese companies.

It will continue to push forward even closer collaboration as Saudi-China bilateral ties deepen.

The group is among the first Saudi private companies to establish business in China.

It started in the textile industry and officially inaugurated its first factory in 2002 in Suzhou city, East China's Jiangsu province. This was followed by another one in Zaozhuang city of East China's Shandong province in 2003.

Now all the group's textile businesses in China have been consolidated into Shandong Lawrence Textile in Zaozhuang, which covers an area of 174,732 square meters with more than 5,500 dedicated employees.

Meanwhile, the group has expanded new strategic businesses in recent years, bringing Chinese companies in technology, healthcare, financial services, high-end consumer goods, manufacturing, metal and mining, logistics and tourism to jointly explore the huge potential of the Saudi, Middle East and North African markets, known as MENA.

"As the synergy between the Belt and Road Initiative and the Saudi Vision 2030 deepens, we believe, with the leadership and support of the two nations' governments, the exchanges and cooperation between Chinese and Saudi businesses will continue to grow, and economic and trade cooperation will become much stronger," said Mohammed bin Abdulaziz Al Ajlan, vice-chairman of Ajlan & Bros and its subsidiaries, who also chairs the Saudi-Chinese Business Council.

On top of this, he has been awarded as an honorary citizen of Zaozhuang and made a friendship ambassador for Shandong, due to his business' contribution to the province's economy and society.

> As the synergy between the Belt and Road Initiative and the Saudi Vision 2030 deepens, we believe, with the leadership and support of the two nations' governments, the exchanges and cooperation between Chinese and Saudi businesses will continue to grow, and economic and trade cooperation will become much stronger."
>
> **Mohammed bin Abdulaziz Al Ajlan**, vice-chairman of Ajlan & Bros and its subsidiaries

This year marks the group's 20th anniversary of officially entering the Chinese market.

In 2022, the group has partnered with more than 10 leading Chinese companies and entered into various projects with a total value of almost 60 billion yuan ($8.4 billion), making it the group's most prosperous year since its diversification started in China.

The group has signed a strategic cooperation agreement with China Harbour Engineering, a large State-owned enterprise specializing in infrastructure construction, to work on global projects.

60 billion yuan
value of the projects that Ajlan & Bros has entered into in China this year

Meanwhile, the group is establishing joint ventures with China's industry leaders including logistics company SF International; mining company Chifeng Gold; smart pharmacy solutions provider Shanghai General Healthy Information and Technology; and CHINT, an intelligent energy solutions provider.

In 2017, the group began to transform and diversify its business in accordance with Saudi Vision 2030, which was released in 2016 to diversify the country's economy.

It has been looking to introduce Chinese companies that are leaders in new strategic industries to the Saudi and MENA markets.

Since then, the Saudi government has implemented a number of favorable policies and measures to attract foreign investment.

After the bumper year of 2022, the group believes in further Chinese business development in 2023 and beyond.

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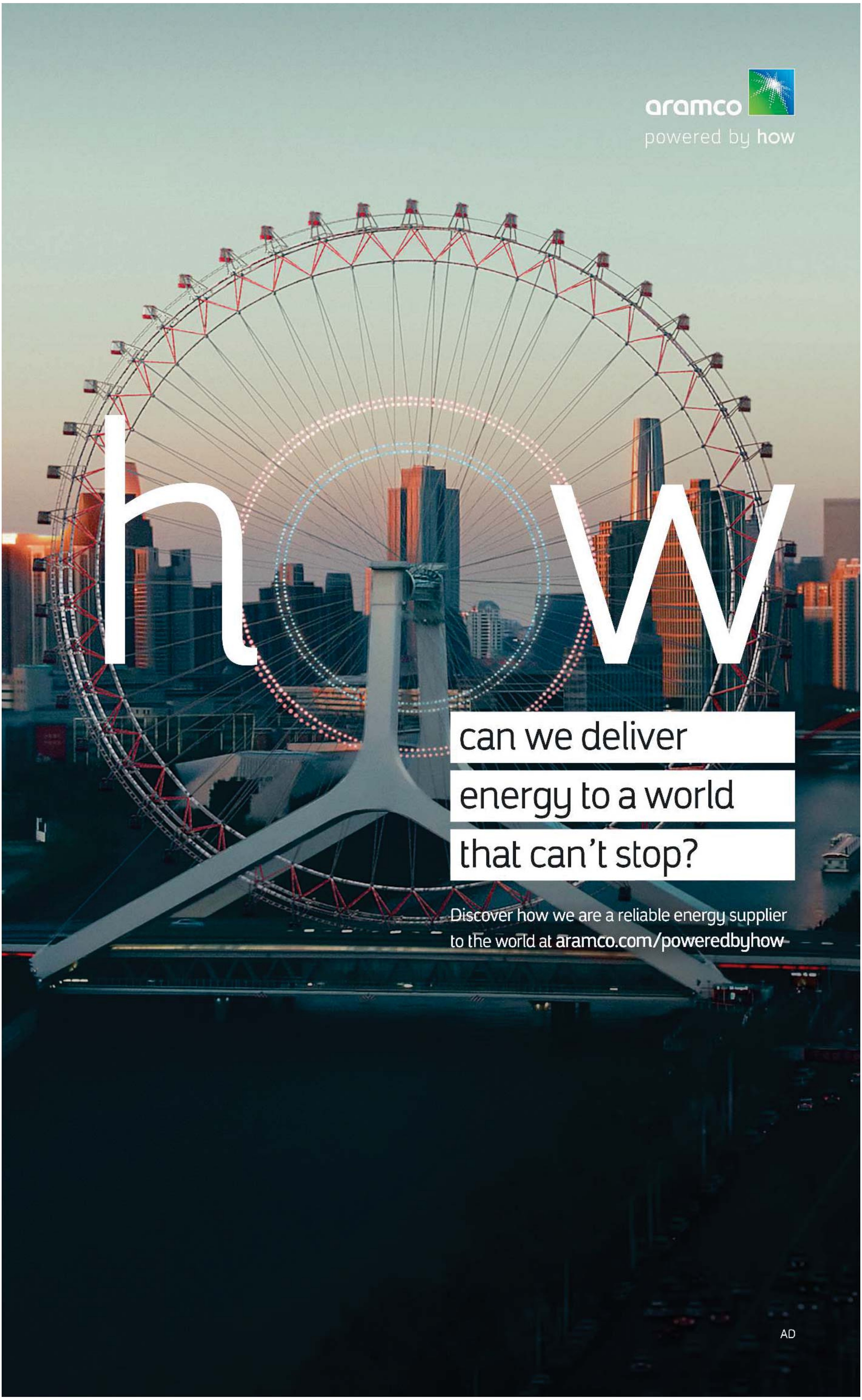
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From left: Visitors view products at the Saudi Arabia booth at the second China International Import Expo in Shanghai in 2019. LYU LIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY A Hongqi H9 model is displayed at a store in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. WANG HAIZHOU / XINHUA

Chinese companies help country develop into foreign-investment powerhouse

Both nations have been committed to solidifying long-term economic growth

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Chinese companies will play a key role in facilitating Saudi Arabia's construction of modern infrastructure and service facilities to help the kingdom attract more foreign investment and put economic growth on a firmer footing in the long run, business leaders said.

They added that continued foreign and domestic investment in infrastructure development such as ports, roads and airports will offer practical solutions in supporting economic growth across many Middle East countries over the next decade, creating better conditions to stimulate trade and people-to-people exchanges in this regional market.

With the continuous and rapid development of bilateral relations in recent years, a growing number of Chinese companies started doing business in Saudi Arabia, making positive contributions to localizing Saudi Arabia's industrial sector, promoting employment and bolstering development in various fields, said Ma Yu, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation in Beijing.

One such company is China Railway Eighteenth Bureau Group, or CR18BG, a subsidiary of State-owned China Railway Construction Corp, which secured a 6.5 billion yuan ($934 million) contract in June from Rua Al Madinah Holding, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Saudi Public Investment Fund, for the construction of a 5-kilometer-long tunnel in Madinah.

The key developer of the Madinah Tunnel Project, PIF aims to complete it within 42 months. This is a part of the Grand Mosque revamp project in Saudi Arabia.

The tunnel work includes building a number of tunnel and related projects, including a pedestrian bridge.

Under the contract, the Tianjin-headquartered Chinese company will handle the structure and decoration of the pedestrian bridge.

The company will also be responsible for structure, decoration and internal mechanical, electrical, and plumbing works of the underground passage.

Chen Debin, general manager of CR18BG's Saudi Arabia branch, said the company has adopted the advantages of China's industrial chain in the field of construction manufacturing, to meet its client's demand for ecological protection, energy saving and waste reduction.

"Thanks to the closer ties between China and Saudi Arabia, local policies are fairly favorable to the Chinese business contractors," Chen said.

He added that the group will deploy more resources and manpower in target countries such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in the coming years as the companies there have built a large number of projects, including bridges, tunnels, roads, residential buildings, office complexes and other commercial buildings.

The countries have advanced policies in attracting global businesses to build a presence in their markets.

Eager to grab more market share in the fast-growing market generated by trade in services between China and Saudi Arabia, Ajlan & Bros Holding Group, or ABHG, a Saudi Arabia-based conglomerate, partnered with Chinese courier and logistics service provider SF Express to set up a joint venture in Saudi Arabia in the first quarter of this year.

The joint venture's main tasks involve introducing the latest technological solutions in the country's logistics sector and creating fresh growth points for its cross-border e-commerce sector.

In contrast to the merchandise trade, trade in services refers to the purchase and sale of services. According to the World Trade Organization, trade in services cover 12 major sectors.

These include commerce, communication, construction and related engineering, finance, entertainment, culture, sports, tourism, education and environment.

The Saudi group also sealed a deal with Inner Mongolia autonomous region-based Chifeng Jilong Gold Mining to establish a joint venture designed to conduct gold exploration in Saudi Arabia earlier this year.

Thanks to Saudi Arabia's efforts to develop more clean-energy-related projects, Jinko Power Technology, a Shanghai-headquartered photovoltaic product manufacturer and solar power facility provider, won a contract to build a 300-megawatt peak solar photovoltaic park in the country in February.

The project is located in Central province, approximately 80 km from Riyadh. Electricity generated from this project will be acquired by Riyadh-based Saudi Power Procurement through a 25-year power purchase deal. The construction will take place in 2022 and 2023.

Once operational, the new energy park will help to cut carbon emissions in Saudi Arabia by over 500,000 metric tons per year. Investment for the project is valued at over $200 million, according to the Chinese company.

"This deal has enhanced our market presence in Saudi Arabia as well as the Middle East region," said Li Xiande, chairman of Jinko Solar.

After years of growth, Chinese companies in Saudi Arabia have significantly contributed to the country's development and fulfilled their social responsibilities, according to a report released by the Contact Office of Chinese Companies in Saudi Arabia this month.

Drafted by the branch of China Petrochemical Corporation, or Sinopec in Saudi Arabia, the Social Responsibility Report of Chinese Companies in Saudi Arabia presents several cases of the economic, environmental and social responsibility programs undertaken by Chinese enterprises in Saudi Arabia in recent years.

Chen Weiqing, Chinese ambassador to Saudi Arabia, said Chinese enterprises have overcome difficulties and assumed heavy responsibilities. They contributed to the development of the Belt and Road Initiative, and injected momentum into the economic and trade cooperation between China and Saudi Arabia.

The report said Chinese businesses have driven the growth of local manufacturing and business by cooperating with local partners and facilitating sustainable economic and social development in local places via technology transfers.

Chinese companies also teamed up with local governments and businesses to provide better public services, including communications, electricity, public transportation and medical care, all of which helped to improve local people's livelihoods.

The report added that the Chinese enterprises also strictly follow a philosophy of green development in their production. In addition to being Saudi Arabia's major trading partner, China can offer its technical and technological capacities, which will contribute to Riyadh's industrial powerhouse ambitions and supply chain infrastructure, said Feng Yaoxiang, director of the trade and investment promotion department at the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade in Beijing.

Backed by China's strong industrial and supply chains, Chinese companies still have more options to further diversify their market channels in Saudi Arabia and other Middle East markets, given the accelerating globalization and many economies' demands for building or upgrading infrastructure facilities, he added.

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Fresh growth seen in promising partnership

By YUAN SHENGGAO

The enhanced political trust and practical trade facilitation measures between China and Saudi Arabia will generate fresh growth momentum in the fields of commodity trade, people-to-people exchanges and two-way investment in the coming years, industry experts said.

They made the remarks after the governments of the two countries met in the fourth session of the Sub-Committee for Trade and Investment under the China-Saudi Arabia High-Level Joint Committee in late September, calling to deepen two-way investment cooperation, tap into the potential of trade and other topics, said information released by China's Ministry of Commerce.

Both sides agreed to move faster with the free trade agreement negotiations between China and the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC).

They plan to shore up two-way investment cooperation on the digital economy and green development, and deepen practical cooperation on e-commerce and trade promotion to promote development of the China-Saudi Arabia comprehensive strategic partnership with concrete results of commercial cooperation.

Headquartered in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, the GCC is a political and economic union of six Arab states that border the Persian Gulf. The countries are Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, some of which are considered among the world's top fossil fuel-exporting countries.

The China-GCC free trade agreement, once signed, will open up to China a market of six rich countries, which mainly rely on imports.

Chinese goods will be fairly competitive there, and will be transferred to neighboring regions through the group, said Gao Lingyun, director of the international investment division at the Institute of World Economics and Politics, which is part of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

As the Saudi side stands ready to promote cooperation with China on trade and investment, 5G development, renewable energy, smart cities, auto manufacturing, third-party market and other emerging areas, the country's economic structure will be further diversified, instead of relying heavily on traditional pillar industries in oil and gas, petrochemicals and plastics, and extraction of metals and minerals, said Ding Rijia, a professor specializing in the energy economy at China University of Mining and Technology in Beijing.

For instance, Saudi Telecom Company, a major Saudi telecommunications services provider, and China's Huawei Technologies reached a new milestone with the innovation of an advanced commercial link solution in Dammam, in the eastern province of Saudi Arabia, in May.

This was the first time in the industry that a single-antenna link provided a 10 gigabit per second bandwidth for traditional bands, said a statement released by Huawei in late November.

The Shenzhen, Guangdong province-headquartered company said the service has run well on live networks and delivered high performance during the past six months, exactly as designed.

This deployment reduces the number of antennas by 67 percent and the amount of hardware by 70 percent, providing a simplified and large-bandwidth 5G solution for suburban areas.

"Saudi Arabia is an important transportation and financial hub connecting Asia, Africa and Europe, which makes the country a key economy in participating in the tangible growth of the Belt and Road Initiative," said Lin Meng, director of the modern supply chain research institute under the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation in Beijing.

In the face of sharp changes in the world's political and economic landscape, China is keen to work with Saudi Arabia to make greater contributions to regional and world stability, development and prosperity, said Lin.

Cars await to be shipped to Saudi Arabia at Lianyungang Port in Jiangsu province. WANG CHUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Opportunities abound for Saudi energy enterprises as China takes green path

By YUAN SHENGGAO

With China entering a new era of green and innovation-led growth, Saudi companies from the energy and chemical sectors are deploying more capital and human resources in the country as demand for new energy sources and recyclable materials have surged in recent years.

As the main driver of global demand for energy and industrial chemicals, China's green energy transition is expected to provide massive opportunities for Saudi and other global energy and chemical companies, said Zhao Ying, a researcher at the Beijing-based Institute of Industrial Economics of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

Saudi Arabian Oil Company, or Aramco, the world's largest oil producer by sales revenue, recently launched a non-metallic excellence and innovation center for building materials in Beijing.

Collaborating with Beijing-based China Building Materials Academy, a unit of State-owned China National Building Material Group, the center is dedicated to developing and accelerating the application of advanced composite building materials in construction so as to develop more green building solutions.

The research facility will focus on the research and development of non-metallic materials, including petroleum-based polymers that are more durable, have lower life cycle costs than conventional materials, and have potential to reduce the carbon footprint of the construction industry, according to information released by Aramco.

"We hope the center will play a key role in promoting low-carbon infrastructure in China and contribute to the country's goal of achieving peak emissions before 2030 and carbon neutrality before 2060. These goals aim to address climate change and promote sustainable development. We believe this requires a global effort and collaboration that spans international boundaries and industries," said Anwar Al Hejazi, Aramco's president for Asia.

The Saudi executive said that oil and gas will continue to be critical to the world economy for decades to come.

Therefore, new energy sources need to operate in parallel with hydrocarbons for a long time, and reducing the industry's emissions must be a priority for climate goals to be met, he noted.

After years of market growth in China, Aramco's presence includes refining and petrochemical joint ventures with local partners.

It currently operates more than 1,000 filling stations in nine cities in partnership with China Petrochemical Corp, or Sinopec.

Saudi Basic Industries Corp, or SABIC, the Riyadh-headquartered chemicals manufacturer, vowed to continue investing in innovation and technological development in China.

"We will continue supporting China in the realization of its peak carbon and carbon neutrality goals with lighter, more durable, long-lasting and recyclable materials in 5G communications, electric vehicles, packaging and photovoltaic power generation in the years to come," said Bob Maughon, the group's executive vice-president and chief technology and sustainability officer.

Apart from exploring opportunities in terms of technology for carbon capture, utilization, and storage applications in China, SABIC has been increasing the use of renewable energy, which is a key part of its global roadmap to carbon neutrality, he said.

Developments related to hydrogen are significant for China, which is the world's top hydrogen producer. China's ambition to achieve carbon neutrality by 2060 also calls for lowering the carbon intensity of its hydrogen-production methods from the conventional "grey" to low-carbon blue and green, he added.

Workers hold an online meeting with clients from Saudi Arabia to check wastewater treatment equipment made in China. TANG KE / FOR CHINA DAILY

COMMENT

Editorials

US squeezing sour grapes reaping what it has sown in Middle East

The zeal with which some US media, think tanks and politicians are trying to link China's increasing "clout" in the Middle East with the United States' declining influence in the region has markedly intensified with Chinese President Xi Jinping visiting Saudi Arabia this week.

President Xi is scheduled to attend the first China-Arab States Summit and the China-Gulf Cooperation Council Summit being held in Riyadh and is paying a state visit to Saudi Arabia from Wednesday to Saturday, during which he will talk with dozens of state leaders in the region. This is expected to deepen mutual trust and promote the upgrading of win-win cooperation to new heights.

Given the cold shoulder that US President Joe Biden met during his visit to Saudi Arabia five months ago, the US media can't hide the sour grapes they are squeezing. But the booming relations between China and countries in the region reflect the fact that the harder Washington tries to isolate China from the world, the more it isolates the US instead.

The US' weakening influence in the Middle East results from not only its condescending stance and America-first agenda while developing relations with the region, but also the fact that all regional countries have seen through the nature of its blood-for-oil strategy.

In contrast, China's interactions with these countries have always been mutually beneficial and carried out on an equal footing with mutual respect.

The increasingly closer ties between China and the Middle East are built on their historical friendly exchanges, strong economic complementarity and common support for multilateralism. It is not targeted at any third party, and it is not opportunism based on the US' strategic contraction across the Middle East.

But China and the Arab states have shared focuses in their development strategies, similar visions for development and complementary development strengths, which makes them natural cooperation partners.

For Washington, however, countries are either allies or not, democracies or not, civilized or not, and fundamentally those that share US "values" or not.

Compared with the high and pragmatic agenda of the ongoing meetings in Riyadh, ranging from green growth and common development to climate change and technology cooperation, the bad light Washington is trying to cast on them proves that the US is continuing to needlessly alienate itself from other countries.

In contrast, continuing China's recent intensive head-of-state diplomacy, Xi's visit reflects the strong momentum in ties between China and Arab states, which has seen the Arab countries collectively "looking East". It is hoped that the milestone summits can help stabilize the region and further promote shared development.

Washington must be clear-eyed of risks

The meeting in Bali, Indonesia, between Chinese President Xi Jinping and United States President Joe Biden on the sidelines of the G20 Summit was significant in that it provided an opportunity for the two countries' leaders to clarify their respective governments' positions and bottom lines in dealing with bilateral relations.

That the meeting took place at all revealed a shared interest in avoiding misjudgment and instilling stability and predictability into the recently volatile relationship. Yet, just as the Chinese leader told his counterpart, it takes efforts from both sides to maintain constructive engagement.

What is happening in Washington regarding Taiwan, however, clearly goes against the kind of healthy, manageable China-US interaction the two leaders expressed they aspired to in Bali.

During their face-to-face talks, the Chinese president reiterated to his US counterpart that Taiwan stands at the core of China's core national interests, constitutes the foundation of the political foundation of China-US relations, and is thus the first redline that must not be crossed. Citing Biden's repeated claim of commitment to not supporting independence for Taiwan, he urged the latter to honor his words with deeds.

Yet just weeks after saying that the US government is committed to the one-China policy, it does not seek to use the Taiwan question as a tool to contain China, and hopes to see peace and stability across the Taiwan Straits, the Biden administration signed off on the sale of a fresh package of arms worth more than $425 million to the island, mainly spare aircraft parts for Taiwan's military.

This may not seem like such an "escalation" in US arms sales to Taiwan that the package itself would result in a conspicuous blow to the already frayed ties. No matter how Beijing protests, Washington will continue insisting there's no change to its "one-China policy". But as it is outright interference in China's domestic affairs at a sensitive time, it is damaging to overall bilateral ties. More important, this is only a small token of US military support for the island compared to what is to happen.

The "Taiwan Enhanced Resilience Act", which is included in the National Defense Authorization Act the US Senate and House Armed Services committees just unveiled, is expected to be approved by Congress and signed into law this month. This will mark a conspicuous escalation in US military intervention in Taiwan affairs, which will deal a heavier blow to the two countries' relations.

The proposed legislation promises up to an annual $2 billion in military grant assistance for Taiwan from 2023 to 2027 to boost the island's military capabilities.

At a time when Western politicians are creating a hullabaloo about an imminent mainland "invasion" of Taiwan, and independence seekers on the island are becoming increasingly bold in their efforts to push the envelope, the US moves are adding fuel to the fire.

If Washington is serious about crisis management, it must see the dangerous potentials of such stunts and practice restraint. The "China challenge" they are clamoring about may blind them to the truth on the ground and lead them onto a perilous track of confrontation that is in neither country's interest.

EU should work with others to make world flatter

While officials from the United States and the European Union reportedly touched on other issues such as the spillover effects from the conflict between Russia and Ukraine and a "joint road map" to assess trustworthy artificial intelligence technologies, it was the US' Inflation Reduction Act that dominated their trade discussions on Monday.

The act, designed to accelerate the US transition to a low-carbon economy, contains around $370 billion in subsidies for the green energy industry in the US, as well as tax breaks for US-made electric cars and batteries. This has had the EU up in arms. It says the act is "distortive" and that it will be forced to take action "to rebalance the playing field".

Monday's meeting of the US-EU Trade and Technology Council, the third such talks, was part of a push to resolve the dispute and "to grow the bilateral trade and investment relationship", according to a statement from the US National Security Council.

But that looks far-fetched given the EU's concerns that the subsidies are a "job killer" and it will effectively decimate the green industries in Europe.

The EU initiatives on the transition to a green and digital economy have made European industries more competitive, but that competitiveness will essentially be wiped out by the US subsidies.

EU Internal Market Commissioner Thierry Breton did not even take part in the meetings, stating that they did not give enough space to issues of concern to many European industry ministers and businesses.

Breton has threatened to take the matter to the World Trade Organization and take retaliatory measures if the United States does not drop the subsidies. The US has offered some olive branches. But asked about the potential "tweaks" to the act that US President Joe Biden mentioned as a possibility last week, a European official involved in the talks dismissed them on Monday, saying that the assessment was they would be "extremely difficult" to realize.

And although the EU's trade commissioner Valdis Dombrovskis said after the meeting, that the EU was leaving it "slightly more optimistic" than it was on entering it, the EU should be aware that the US will expect a price to be paid for any concessions.

The EU should look at the bigger picture. The world is made up of more countries and regions than the US and the EU, and if the two giants adopt subsidy policies that will only make it more difficult for the rest of the world.

The EU should be working with other economies to make the world flatter for the benefit of all, not competing with the US to see which of them can build the biggest wall.

Luo Jie

Opinion Line

IPOs a positive signal emerging from China's A-share market

China has led the world in the number of IPOs issued in its A-share market and the amount of funds raised till November, says a report by accounting firm PricewaterhouseCoopers. Around 400 IPOs will be issued in the A-share market this year, raising more than 560 billion yuan ($80 billion).

Despite some countries going after Chinese companies, China's capital market has managed to maintain sound development and create a stable listing environment for domestic enterprises, effectively increasing the scale of direct financing for enterprises and creating good conditions for them to enhance competitiveness, increase technology research and development, and strengthen brand cultivation.

China's economy has demonstrated huge resilience, laying a solid foundation for the A-share market, thus ensuring that external factors do not erode investor confidence. If the capital market performs well, and capital market transactions remain active, investors will have more confidence and stronger investment desires, which will better promote the economy and create better conditions for enterprises' financing and refinancing. This will also ease the pressure on business operations, stimulate the vitality of micro entities, stabilize employment and boost domestic demand.

Many researchers and analysts believe that in recent years, China's economy, especially Chinese enterprises, and the capital market, have formed positive interactions and promoted positive mutual development. The water of the Chinese economy has fed the fish of the capital market, and the fish of the capital market have added vitality, blood and resilience to the Chinese economy.

To better promote the economy, China's capital market should make greater efforts to improve the quality of listed companies, strengthen market oversight, and improve delisting efficiency to better protect the rights and interests of investors. It is very important that a "good money drives out bad money" mechanism is created to improve investor confidence.

Improving investor confidence is key to maintaining the vitality and enhancing the viability of the market. China's strong economic resilience, enterprises' rising listing enthusiasm, and recovering investor confidence are all favorable to the domestic capital market. However, whether it can enjoy greater development in the future also depends on whether it can substantially improve its quality and standardize its order, especially whether it can better combine the punishment of the responsible person with the compensation for investors for anything that damages the interests of investors.

— BEIJING YOUTH DAILY

Close encounters with personal data misuse

The Supreme People's Procuratorate has made public, by publishing on their official website, five instances in which entities were punished for misusing personal information of residents.

Unlike the odd cases that often find mention in the media, the cases the SPP highlighted on Wednesday were more commonplace.

For example, the culprit in one of the cases had developed a smartphone app that duped users into uploading their photos so that it could "rate the user's appearance". The culprit then illegally sold the photographs in online markets. In another case, the criminals obtained personal information of newborns and their parents and sold it to companies offering massage services to new mothers, thus helping those companies find customers.

The authorities decided to make these cases public because apart from there being new parents everywhere, there are so many gullible people who can be deceived into downloading an app that "rates" appearances.

The cases tell people what constitutes personal information that should be protected from misuse. Facial information, smartphone numbers, clinics or hospitals where women deliver babies are certainly not details that should be made public.

By citing the cases, the SPP has alerted people to how even "minor" cases could be of importance to the judiciary. The website also declared that from January 2019 to this October, procuratorates nationwide had approved the arrest of 13,000 suspects for misusing personal information, and raised public litigation against 28,000 suspects for the same.

For those who worry that their personal information might be leaked or stolen, the five released cases could act as guiding documents on how the procurators protect ordinary citizens' personal information where needed, as well as how to stay alert against possible leaks.

With smartphones and tablets becoming increasingly common, the risk of personal information getting leaked is even higher. We hope the procuratorates and residents can fight the crime together to better protect personal information.

— ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Mobility key to unlocking economic recovery

Among the 10 new guidelines on further optimizing the COVID-19 pandemic prevention and control measures the State Council, China's Cabinet, released on Wednesday, one is of particular importance to minimizing the pandemic's impacts on society and economy in a short time.

That is the negative nucleic acid testing results and health codes, as well as on-the-spot nucleic acid testing for visitors at airports and railway stations, and neighborhoods, are no longer required for travelers.

That means the most important restrictions the virus control work imposed on mobility have been lifted. If local governments faithfully turn on the long-awaited green light as required, which many localities have already done by putting the latest guidelines into practice without any hesitation the moment they were issued, the nation will be taking a big stride toward the goal of returning to its pre-pandemic state.

If population flows are restricted, normal economic and social development is also out of the question. It can be expected that the policy adjustment will release immediate benefits for the recovery of public transport, tourism, hotels and other industries. Especially, as people will now be planning to go home for a family reunion at Spring Festival, which falls on Jan 22 next year.

Once the population can flow freely, the industries that are most affected by the epidemic are expected to reap the dividends of "retaliatory consumption", which will undoubtedly remove the obstacles to the development of related industries and usher in a real opportunity for recovery.

At the same time, people should also be prepared for a soaring of COVID-19 cases and pay more attention to protecting the health of the unvaccinated senior residents, who should be aware that the family reunions that many of them have not had for three years might result in cluster infections.

The cost of the mobility will be seen along with the benefits coming from it.

— BEIJING NEWS

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WORLD

Action sought for biodiversity

Appeals made to tackle nature and species extinction as COP15 opens

By LIU YINMENG and RENA LI in Montreal

People enjoy the immersive video experience hosted by the National Geographic Society at an event during the United Nations Biodiversity Conference in Montreal on Wednesday. ANDREJ IVANOV / AFP

The 15th meeting of the United Nations Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity, or COP15, kicked off on Wednesday with summit leaders calling for international cooperation to tackle rapidly declining nature and species extinction around the world.

In his opening remarks, Huang Runqiu, president of COP15 and China's minister of ecology and environment, stressed that biodiversity is at a crossroads and action is urgently needed to address the issue. "From today's meeting onward, I look forward to seeing the parties, international organizations and stakeholders demonstrate the spirit of international cooperation; show political determination and the utmost sincerity during the second phase of the meeting; fully demonstrate flexibility; and actively seek common ground on key issues," Huang said.

He called on all parties "to make positive political commitments" and to continue to increase international financial input to create favorable conditions for moving consultations forward.

Huang also encouraged high-level representatives such as ministers of countries and heads of international organizations and institutions to focus on solving difficult issues, build "the greatest consensus" and inject political impetus to achieve the "landmark outcome of the conference", namely the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, or GBF.

Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, executive secretary of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, made similar remarks and urged "transformative change", "ambitions" and "commitments" to realize the convention's 2050 vision of "living in harmony with nature".

Mrema also expressed her gratitude to Huang and the Chinese government for their "tireless efforts".

"Through the global pandemic, you found a way for us to not only hold the first part of this COP last year, but to also mobilize the commitment of the world through the Kunming Declaration," she said.

'Ambitious' plans needed

During a COP15 news conference on Wednesday, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called on governments to develop "ambitious national action plans", while also pushing the Global North to increase funding for developing countries.

"We need developed countries to provide meaningful financial support for the countries of the Global South as custodians of the world's natural wealth, following centuries of exploitation and loss," he said.

Guterres spoke highly of China's work in biodiversity protection and climate change, "especially its practical efforts to promote and coordinate all parties as the president of COP15".

The second part of COP15, which is now on in Montreal until Dec 19, follows the first phase of the meeting in Kunming in October 2021.

One issue at stake during COP15 is the lack of sufficient funding for developing countries to meet global biodiversity targets.

Speaking on behalf of the African Union, a representative from Senegal highlighted the need for countries to "commit adequate financial resources" to protect biodiversity.

A delegate from Palau, who represented countries from the Asia-Pacific region, said the nations in the region "highly emphasize the need for adequate resource mobilization", adding that the region welcomes international funding for the implementation of GBF, including the Kunming Biodiversity Fund.

China launched the Kunming Biodiversity Fund during the first part of COP15 in Kunming last year and pledged $230 million to it. The fund will help developing countries support biodiversity protection.

Most of the world's population resides in the Asia-Pacific region, where countries range from landlocked to big ocean states. Hence, there is a divergence of views and opinions among the nations, the Palau delegate said.

"But as a region, we believe that this GBF is an important strategy that can set the world on the path to ensuring its survival, and we are committed to working with other regions to shape the future of global biodiversity in the next couple of weeks," she added.

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San Francisco rejects killer robots use amid criticism

By LIA ZHU in San Francisco
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San Francisco has rejected a policy that would allow police to use lethal robots, after its initial passage of the proposal drew widespread criticism.

The city's Board of Supervisors had passed the police proposal on Nov 29 by an 8-3 vote. It would have authorized police to deploy ground-based robots with deadly force in extraordinary circumstances, such as when a mass shooter or terrorist is threatening the lives of officers or civilians.

The policy sparked a public outcry, as opponents worried that it could lead to more police violence. Demonstrators protested the policy on Monday in front of San Francisco City Hall, holding "No Killer Robots" signs.

In a second vote on Tuesday, the supervisors voted unanimously to ban the use of robots for deadly force and sent the issue back to a committee for additional review, leaving it open for future review.

San Francisco police have a fleet of ground-based robots for reconnaissance, bomb disposal and rescue operations. They are not equipped with lethal force, but "could potentially be equipped with explosive charges", the police department said.

San Francisco was the first city in the United States to take steps to adopt an ordinance authorizing police use of deadly robots.

The first law enforcement agency that has used such technology is believed to be the Dallas Police Department. It killed a gunman by blowing him up with a bomb attached to a robot in 2016. The suspect was accused of fatally shooting five police officers.

The lethal use of robots has since become a controversial topic.

Supporters said it is helpful to apprehend suspects in mass shootings without putting officers' lives in danger. Opponents are concerned over the militarization of the police and potential disproportionate harm to communities of color.

During a heated debate at the San Francisco board meeting last week, Supervisor Aaron Peskin and others who supported the policy said it was necessary to empower police with such technology after several mass shootings across the country.

Mayor London Breed supported the measure, saying "(if) there is technology that can help to end the violence and save lives, we need to allow police to use these tools to save lives".

Board President Shamann Walton was worried that it would sow distrust within communities and not necessarily save lives.

"Most law enforcement weapons are used against people of color," Walton said at the meeting.

'Potential for misuse'

Supervisor Dean Preston, who voted against the policy during the first vote, said there is "serious potential for misuse and abuse of this military-grade technology, and zero showing of necessity".

"The people of San Francisco have spoken loud and clear: There is no place for killer police robots in our city," he said in a statement after the vote. "We should be working on ways to decrease the use of force by local law enforcement, not giving them new tools to kill people."

The San Francisco Public Defender's Office, in a letter, said the policy was "dehumanizing and militaristic".

The vote was the result of a new state law that requires police departments to have an inventory of equipment including certain guns and to seek explicit approval for their use, The Associated Press reported. The new policy needs another vote to take effect.

Agencies contributed to this story.

Egypt special

Egypt, China take steps to boost trade and business cooperation

By YUAN SHENGGAO

With Egypt and China — the world's two most ancient civilizations — creating more favorable conditions to enhance the synergy between the Belt and Road Initiative and Egypt's Vision 2030, their trade and business cooperation will be further enriched in the years ahead, market watchers and business executives said.

Launched in 2016 by the Egyptian government, the North African country's Vision 2030 is a unified long-term political, economic and social vision, having been developed in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

The vision also sets a target to cut greenhouse gases by 10 percent from the energy sector, including oil and gas, by 2030 compared to 2016 levels, information released by the International Energy Agency based in Paris said.

As both countries are keen to follow the path to green and innovation-led growth, they will expand cooperation in production capacity, infrastructure, new energy, agriculture and modern services, as well as high-tech industries, opening new prospects for mutually beneficial cooperation in the coming years, said Wang Xueling, a researcher specializing in regional economic development at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing.

Benefiting from the complementary trade structure and tangible growth of the BRI, the total value of China-Egypt trade soared 37.3 percent on a yearly basis to nearly $19.97 billion in 2021, data from China's General Administration of Customs showed.

Egypt's exports to China include fruits, foodstuffs, cotton, spices, marble, plastics, petroleum products, linens, glass and cowhide. China ships mainly computers, telecommunication and medical equipment, trains, trucks, diesel oil, steel, medical equipment, textiles and household appliances to Egypt.

Egypt succeeded in attracting Chinese investments under the BRI framework, and one of the flagship projects is the China-Egypt TEDA Suez Economic and Trade Cooperation Zone, as it has gradually become one of the important platforms for China-Egypt economic and trade cooperation and cultural exchanges, information released by the Egyptian embassy in Beijing said.

The zone had attracted 96 companies across China and the world, such as Sichuan Honghua Petroleum Equipment and Xiamen Yanjan New Material by the end November, with about 40 of them from the manufacturing sector.

Aside from growing the real economy, China and Egypt also deepened cooperation in developing vocational education, as well as helping the country to build a technical training center project, said Fang Qiuchen, president of the China International Contractors Association, which helps Chinese construction companies expand their business overseas.

He said that Chinese companies will play a key role in improving Egypt's industrialization and proving that building modern infrastructure facilities will help the country put its economic growth on a firmer footing.

For instance, several ministries of Egypt's government moved to the country's new administrative capital city early this year. The new administrative capital is about half an hour's drive from Cairo and is expected to help relieve the pressure on the current capital's population, alleviate traffic problems, create jobs and attract foreign investment.

Contracted by China State Construction Engineering Corp, the central business district project in the new administrative capital city of Egypt included construction and engineering of 20 high-rise buildings and their supporting municipal projects.

The big-ticket project covers about 505,000 square meters and its iconic 385.8-meter tower is the tallest building in Africa, said Yuan Hao, CSCEC's chief designer for the CBD project.

The quay cranes made by China State Shipbuilding Corp's unit in Wuhan are delivered to Egypt from Qingdao in Shandong province on Aug 4. ZHANG JINGANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

From left: A production base of Jushi Egypt for Fiberglass Industry S.A.E. Jushi Egypt now has 1,950 employees and about 98 percent are Egyptians. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Jushi subsidiary flourishing in highly competitive world fiberglass industry

By YUAN SHENGGAO

200,000 metric tons
annual fiberglass output of Jushi Egypt.

Jushi Egypt for Fiberglass Industry S.A.E, a subsidiary of Chinese fiberglass giant China Jushi, has become the largest fiberglass manufacturing base in the Middle East and North Africa, making great contributions to Egyptian economic and social development.

Established in Suez in 2012, the company is Egypt's first fiberglass producer. It has three advanced production lines, with an annual fiberglass output of 200,000 metric tons.

The plant is now the largest China-funded manufacturing enterprise in Egypt as well as China's largest overseas fiberglass project, the company said. Its total assets have doubled over the past decade and its revenue increased about 2.67 times.

Jushi Egypt injected impetus into the Egyptian fiberglass industry and exerted a positive effect on upstream and downstream industries, such as mineral processing, wind power and pipeline manufacturing, a representative from China Jushi said.

Currently, Egypt is the fourth-largest maker of fiberglass in the world, with more than 95 percent of its products exported to Europe and the Americas, according to China Jushi.

The whole industrial chain has gained great momentum as a growing number of fiberglass-related companies were attracted to Egypt, the representative added.

Amr Nassar, Egypt's former minister of trade and industry, said Jushi company filled the gap in Africa for the fiberglass industry. "It also helped Egypt make the best of its rich mineral resources and promoted local economic growth," Nassar said.

In the past 10 years, Jushi Egypt paid taxes of 740 million Egyptian pounds ($30.08 million) and its foreign currency earnings totaled $1 billion.

Zhang Yuqiang, president of China Jushi, said that in addition to economic profits, the enterprise is committed to its social responsibilities and bringing benefits to local residents.

Jushi Egypt now has 1,950 employees and about 98 percent are Egyptians.

"We instructed local people in fiberglass-making techniques and allowed them to get into the top and middle management," said Wu Ping, general manager of Jushi Egypt.

It is conducive to their career development and helps the company break cultural barriers and expand markets in Egypt, Wu said.

One of the Egyptian employees is Ahmed Soliman, who joined Jushi Egypt in 2012 and then received six-month technical training in China.

Soliman had been awarded the title of outstanding employee for three consecutive years due to his excellent job performance and became the first Egyptian executive in charge of production at Jushi.

"During the nine years in Jushi, I grew from a university graduate to an experienced manager, which I could not expect before," Soliman said.

He added he was very grateful for the enterprise and Chinese colleagues who taught him and encouraged him. "We are almost like families here," Soliman said.

Jushi Egypt attaches much importance to staff welfare, offering employees free dormitories, gyms, supermarkets and healthcare centers. Considering most Egyptian workers are Muslims, it established prayer rooms and special canteens.

The company also participates in charity events regularly, donating daily necessities to orphanages and poor residents in surrounding communities.

This section is sponsored by Jushi Egypt for Fiberglass Industry S.A.E.

WORLD

New president pledges to heal Peru's wounds

Boluarte's embattled predecessor ousted, arrested after bid to dissolve Congress

LIMA, Peru — Peru swore in a new leader on Wednesday after a day of political drama that saw Pedro Castillo arrested after his ousting from office in an impeachment trial, following his last-ditch bid to cling to power by dissolving Congress.

Ignoring Castillo's attempt to shut down the legislature by decree, lawmakers moved ahead with the previously planned trial, with 101 votes in favor of removing him, six against and 10 abstentions.

The result was announced to loud cheers, and the legislature called on Vice-President Dina Boluarte to take office.

The 60-year-old was sworn in as president through 2026, making her the first woman to lead the Andean nation. She called for a political truce after months of instability, including two prior impeachment attempts, and said a new cabinet inclusive of all political stripes would be formed.

"What I ask for is a space, a time to rescue the country," she said.

Born in the southern Apurimac region, Boluarte is a trained lawyer with a master's degree from San Martin de Porres University. Last year, she assumed the vice-presidency and also served as minister of development and social inclusion.

She lambasted Castillo's move to dissolve Congress as an "attempted coup".

The Public Ministry said on Wednesday that Castillo had been detained and accused of the crimes of "rebellion" and "conspiracy" for breaking the constitutional order.

Castillo was later transferred to a police facility in eastern Lima, where graft-convicted former president Alberto Fujimori — himself removed by Congress in 2000 — is serving out his sentence.

Castillo earlier had said he would temporarily shut down Congress, launch a "government of exception", and call for new legislative elections. That sparked resignations by his ministers amid angry accusations from both opposition politicians and his allies that he was attempting a coup.

On Wednesday, some small street protests took place. In Lima, dozens of people waving Peruvian flags cheered Castillo's downfall. Elsewhere in the capital and in Arequipa city, his supporters marched and clashed with police.

Political instability

Peru is no stranger to political instability. It is now on its sixth president since 2016, and it had three different presidents during one five-day period in 2020.

After Wednesday's attempt to dissolve Congress, Castillo's allies abandoned him and regional powers voiced deep concern and underlined the need for "democratic stability".

"The United States categorically rejects any extra constitutional act by President Castillo to prevent Congress from fulfilling its mandate," Lisa Kenna, the US ambassador to Peru, wrote on Twitter.

Later on Wednesday, the US State Department welcomed Boluarte's appointment in a statement.

Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, president-elect of Brazil, said in a statement: "I followed with great concern the events that led to the constitutional removal of the president of Peru, Pedro Castillo. It is always regrettable that a democratically elected president has this fate, but I understand that everything was forwarded in the constitutional framework."

The turmoil rattled markets in the world's number two copper producer, but Andres Abadia, chief Latin America economist at Pantheon Macroeconomics, said Peru's financial markets will suffer, but won't collapse, thanks mainly to solid domestic fundamentals.

XINHUA—AGENCIES

Dina Boluarte attends a swearing-in ceremony to become Peru's new president during a Congress session in Lima on Wednesday. MARIANA BAZO / XINHUA

An expert of the prosecutor's office on Wednesday examines collected remnants of shells and missiles used in the battlefields in Kharkiv, the second largest city of Ukraine. ALEKSEY FILIPPOV / AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Putin warns of lengthy conflict with Kyiv; no plan for more conscription

MOSCOW/KYIV — Russian President Vladimir Putin has acknowledged that Russian forces could be fighting in Ukraine for a long time, but said there will be no second call-up of soldiers for now.

Putin has rarely spoken about the duration of the conflict that began more than nine months ago, but told loyalists in a televised meeting on Wednesday that it could go on for some time yet.

"This can be a long process," he said.

Russia launched its special military operation in Ukraine in February, saying Kyiv's deepening ties with the West posed a security threat.

Putin, in his remarks, said the risk of a nuclear war was growing, but Russia would not recklessly threaten to use such weapons.

"We have not gone crazy, we are aware of what nuclear weapons are," Putin said.

"We have these means in more advanced and modern form than any other nuclear country. ... But we aren't about to run around the world brandishing this weapon like a razor."

But he acknowledged the growing tensions, saying: "Such a threat is rising. Why make a secret out of it here?"

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz declared that the risk of nuclear weapons being used in the Ukraine conflict has lessened due to international pressure heaped on Russia.

"One thing has changed for the time being. Russia has stopped threatening to use nuclear weapons," Scholz said in an interview with Germany's Funke media group, adding that it was "in response to the international community marking a red line".

About 150,000 of 300,000 Russian reservists called up in September and October had been deployed in Ukraine, with 77,000 in combat units, Putin said. The remaining 150,000 were still at training centers.

"Under these conditions, talk about any additional mobilization measures simply makes no sense," Putin said.

Russia's economy has overcome the short-term slump caused by the partial mobilization order, but the disinflationary impact it had in reducing consumer demand has practically disappeared, the central bank said on Wednesday.

Despite the loss of Kherson — the one Ukrainian provincial capital Russia had captured, Putin said Moscow has no regrets about launching the special operation.

He said Russia has achieved a "significant result" with the acquisition of "new territories", referring to the Donetsk, Lugansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions.

Fresh EU sanctions

Meanwhile, the European Commission on Wednesday proposed the ninth package of sanctions against Russia that will include almost 200 individuals and entities and cut Russia's access to drones.

The ninth package proposes adding almost 200 additional individuals and entities to the sanctions list, including the Russian armed forces, as well as individual officers and defense industrial companies, among others.

So far, more than 1,200 individuals and 118 entities connected to Russia have been sanctioned, including Putin and his inner circle.

European military spending topped 200 billion euros ($210 billion) for the first time in 2021, the European Defence Agency said on Thursday, accounting for 1.5 percent of the 26 EDA member states' gross domestic product.

It rose 6 percent from 2020 to 214 billion euros, EDA said in its annual Defence Data Report.

Russian forces have fired more than 1,000 rockets and missiles at Ukraine's power grid, which is still working despite major damage, Interfax-Ukraine news agency reported on Wednesday, citing officials of grid operator Ukrenergo.

Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko warned of an "apocalypse" scenario without power, running water or heat this winter if Russian airstrikes on infrastructure continue.

Kyiv could be left without central heating at a time when temperatures can fall as low as -15 C, Klitschko said in an interview.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

Briefly

BANGLADESH

AIIB to provide $250m for social development

The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, or AIIB, will provide $250 million to help Bangladesh improve the inclusiveness and responsiveness of social development. The loan will be given as budgetary support under the Strengthening Social Resilience Program. The agreement was signed between the government of Bangladesh and AIIB on Wednesday. Bangladesh had earlier received $800 million from AIIB as budget support in the last three financial years to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

VIETNAM

Defense firms vie for arms sales at Hanoi fair

Defense firms from the United States and Russia on Thursday displayed weapons and promoted models of aircraft at Vietnam's first large-scale arms fair, as the two powers vie for influence and arms sales in the strategic Southeast Asian country. The event at an air base in the capital Hanoi attracted 174 exhibitors from 30 countries, including most large arms-making nations, as Vietnam signaled its interest in diversifying military procurements and possibly starting exports of its own weapons.

DENMARK

Oldest DNA reveals life 2 million years ago

Scientists said on Wednesday that they had found DNA dating back 2 million years — the oldest ever extracted — in sediment from the Ice Age, opening a new chapter in paleogenetics. "We are breaking the barrier of what we thought we could reach in terms of genetic studies," said Mikkel Winther Pedersen, co-author of a new study published in science journal Nature. New technology enabled the scientists to determine that the 41 fragments in Greenland were more than a million years older than the oldest known DNA from a Siberian mammoth.

XINHUA—AGENCIES

Spirit of peace, cooperation urged for better future of China-Japan relations

By ZHAO RUINAN
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Experts have called for continuous progress in Sino-Japanese relations on a track of peace, friendship and cooperation, so as to work together to build a community with a shared future for humankind.

They made the remarks during a webinar held by Nanjing Normal University this week.

Lin Minjie, head of the Oriental Studies Center at Nanjing Normal University, presided over the meeting and relayed a message by former Japanese prime minister Yukio Hatoyama, in which Hatoyama outlined the history of normalization of diplomatic ties between China and Japan.

Hatoyama also expressed his hope for better and closer ties between the two countries.

As this year marks the 50th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations between China and Japan, Yasuhiko Washiyama, former president of Tokyo Gakugei University, looked back at the historical course of the 50 years and pinned his high hopes on better future ties between the two countries.

Official data showed that trade volume between China and Japan has increased from $1.1 billion in 1972 to $371.4 billion in 2021, and two-way investment volume has reached nearly $130 billion.

Eiichi Shindo, chairman of the International Academic Society for Asian Community, rejected the so-called China threat theory, while attaching great importance to the Belt and Road Initiative and building an Asian community with a shared future amid rising global uncertainty.

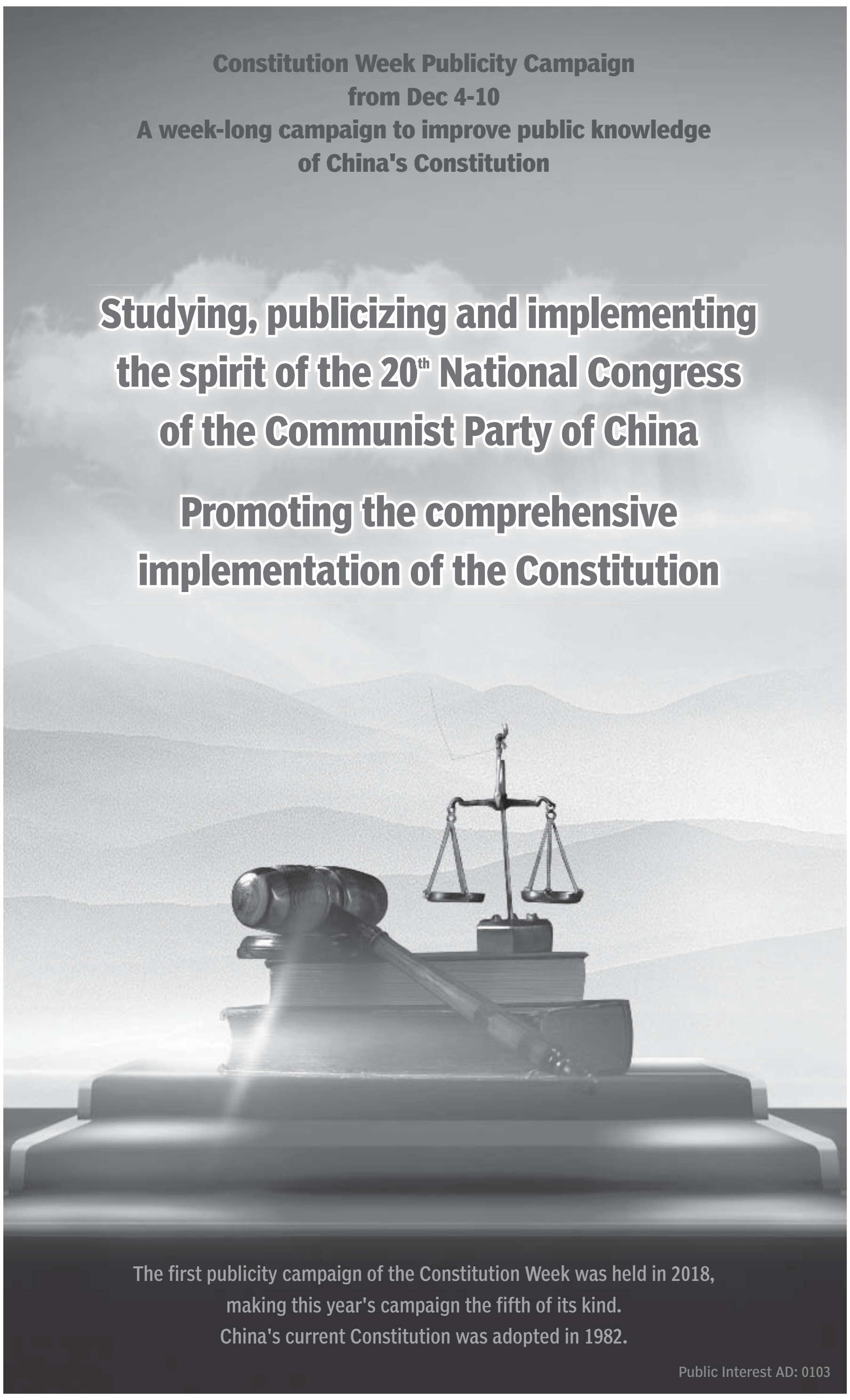
Akira Kimura, professor emeritus at Kagoshima University, emphasized the importance of avoiding conflicts and wars, saying that maintaining peace and regional stability in East Asia is a must.

Park Jae-woo, former dean of the Graduate School at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, said both China and the Korean Peninsula share a common destiny, citing antiwar poems in both sides in Chinese during World War II.

Lin called on all parties to learn from history, inherit the spirit of peace and convey China's voice in multiple dimensions around the globe.

By doing so, people from many countries can have a better understanding of China, boost mutual trust and promote the building of a community with a shared future for humankind, she added.

The webinar on Sunday was attended by more than 600 people online, including more than 30 researchers from China, Japan and South Korea.



Visitors return to the food street in Taiyuan as local restaurants resume their business activities. WU LIUHONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Shanxi's small businesses get tax breaks to recover from pandemic

China Shanxi

Province's taxation authorities mount efforts to help micro enterprises grow

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Liu Haitao, an owner of a restaurant in Taiyuan Food Street, a hub of catering businesses in the Shanxi provincial capital of Taiyuan, was glad to see diners gradually return over the past few weeks.

"The past three years was extremely difficult for small businesses like mine due to the COVID-19 pandemic," Liu said. "I'm satisfied that I can still keep my business moving."

He said the local government has offered crucial support to his operations and that is why he is freed from the worry of bankruptcy.

He especially mentioned the reduction of taxes and charges, saying it was among the most helpful of policy measures the government had implemented to help with economic recovery.

"When smelling the increasingly dense fragrance of various snacks and food, hearing the louder noises of hawking and bargaining, I know everything is back," Liu said. "And we know our future is assured."

The scene on the street is a positive sign of the recovery of business activities in Taiyuan as well as the entire province of Shanxi, especially for small, household operations.

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic at the end of 2019, how to help small businesses survive has been a top priority of the taxation administrations at all levels in Shanxi.

An official with the Shanxi Local Taxation Bureau said that the province's taxation authorities have made sustained efforts to help small, micro businesses grow.

"We have made several upgrades to our preferential taxation policies as the pandemic proceeded," the official said.

In 2020, small corporate taxpayers that are composed of mostly household businesses, saw their value-added tax decline to 1 percent from the previous 3 percent per their taxable sales revenue. At the same time, they were allowed to delay their personal income tax payments if they had difficulties in operations.

A new policy was released in 2021 allowing small business owners to have a value-added tax exemption for a part of annual business revenue worth 150,000 yuan ($21,450), compared with 100,000 yuan in 2020. A 50 percent reduction in the tax was applied to annual sales revenue between 150,000 yuan and 1 million yuan.

This year, the incentives were further expanded, allowing a periodical exemption of all value-added tax for small businesses in case of difficulties caused by pandemic outbreaks.

In addition to tax reduction and exemption, household businesses also enjoy a reduction in various charges for unemployment insurance, workplace injury insurance and pensions.

In China, the various insurance schemes that form the social security system involve the funding contributions from the government, business entities and individuals. The exemption of business contributions means a substantial cut in operational costs.

Local statistics show that, the reduction of taxes for small and micro enterprises in Shanxi amounted to 29.16 billion yuan in a period spanning from 2020 to September this year. The value accounted for 39.94 percent of the total amount of taxation incentives to all enterprises in Shanxi during the period.

The preferential taxation treatment to small and micro enterprises is not simply about subtraction, the official said. He explained that meticulous services are needed to ensure that all business owners can directly benefit from the incentives.

"Small business owners are not always well informed, so we need to make all the new policies known to them," the official said.

"Even if they are informed, they might not be familiar with the procedures in dealing with tax reduction or rebates. In this case, taxation officials will offer them assistance to complete all the procedures. We use subtraction when reducing taxes and addition in offering services," the official added.

The taxation authorities in Shanxi have also strengthened collaborations with other governmental institutions and social entities to better serve taxpayers.

One practice for such collaborations is the one-stop service initiative launched by Shanxi's taxation bureaus, which also incorporates the procedures for collecting charges relating to pensions, unemployment and medical insurance, as well as applications for loans.

In the Yangqu Industrial Park in Taiyuan, for instance, taxation authorities have joined hands with local banks and legal service institutions to hold seminars for household businesses, helping them get familiar with the latest taxation policies, apply for loans on-site and better understand laws and regulations to ensure their rights can be protected.

Ren Zhixia contributed to this story.

E-commerce pilot zone established in Yuncheng

By YUAN SHENGGAO

The proposal for developing a State-level cross-border e-commerce pilot zone in Yuncheng was approved by the State Council on Nov 24, together with another 32 cities and regions that put forward the same application.

This marks the establishment of the China (Yuncheng) Cross-Border E-Commerce Comprehensive Pilot Zone, the third such State-level zone in Shanxi province and following those set up in the cities of Taiyuan and Datong.

Local officials said the zone's establishment is confirmation of the booming foreign trade business in Yuncheng and is expected to make the city a new engine for Shanxi's opening-up and international economic cooperation.

According to the requirements of the State Council, the zone should be designed to accumulate new experiences in online cross-border transactions, logistics, payment, settlement, customs clearance and tariff rebates.

The pilot zone would be encouraged to implement innovative practices relating to governance, management, service and synergic development, creating a beneficial ecosystem for cross-border e-commerce and cultivating a full industrial chain.

Yuncheng is among the most active players in Shanxi's international trade, which has laid a solid foundation for developing this new model of foreign trade.

The city's customs office said that during the first 10 months of the year, Yuncheng's foreign trade volume totaled 10.04 billion yuan ($1.44 billion), growing 47.2 percent year-on-year. The increase ranked it first among all the cities in Shanxi.

Its imports hit 5.12 billion yuan during the period, up 21.4 percent. Its exports reached 4.92 billion yuan, rising 88.9 percent.

Both the State-owned and privately run businesses are top players in Yuncheng's foreign trade. They respectively accounted for roughly half of Yuncheng's imports and exports, the city's customs office said.

For Shanxi as a whole, the province has issued a number of preferential policies to support cross-border e-commerce.

One of them is the establishment of overseas warehouses for cross-border e-commerce transactions. Under this model, imported goods are first transported to overseas warehouses and then transactions will be made online between suppliers and buyers.

Industry insiders said such a method can allow deliveries to reach buyers more rapidly, thus improving the efficiency of transactions.

The first deal of overseas warehouse delivery was made between Taiyuan-based Huayuan Land Port Cross-Border E-Commerce Corp and Shangzhuo, a glass manufacturer based in Qixian county, on Oct 16. Huayuan then began to transport Shangzhuo's products to its overseas warehouses in Long Beach, California, in the United States.

Yan Jie and Meng Ting contributed to this story.

Beverages produced by local companies are among the major exports from Shanxi. LI ZHAOMIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

White liquor producer exhibits goods in Berlin

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Xinghuacun Fenjiu Group, a renowned white liquor manufacturer based in the city of Fenyang in Shanxi province, exhibited its products at a high-end industrial show in Berlin, Germany, in October, as it undertook a significant move for its globalization.

At the Bar Convent Berlin, an exhibition for the bar and alcoholic beverage industries opening on Oct 10, Xinghuacun Fenjiu displayed six varieties of liquor tailored to international customers.

The pavilion of the company was fitted with remarkable Chinese elements, including the colors of blue and white that are commonly seen on the porcelain bottles containing Chinese liquor. The style attracted the attention of many visitors, said Xinghuacun Fenjiu executives present at the show.

The company's executives also shared with visitors and buyers the long history and rich cultural influences of the company's products.

They said China has an alcoholic beverage production history of about 6,000 years. That is according to an archaeological discovery made at the site where today's Xinghuacun Fenjiu is located. The discovery might prove that Xinghuacun township in the Shanxi city of Fenyang, where Xinghuacun Fenjiu has its headquarters, was the source of China's alcoholic beverage industry.

Wearing ancient Chinese costumes, the service people from Xinghuacun Fenjiu showed how the liquor was served in ancient China. They displayed a full set of rituals relating to bottle-opening, mixing and tasting, arousing the interest of many visitors at the show.

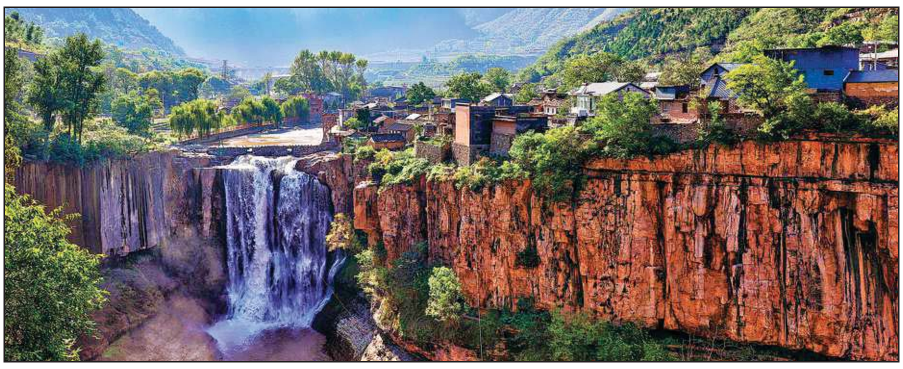
Xinghuacun Fenjiu's executives said the exhibition helped the company get closer to international customers, especially those in Europe. Its exhibition in Berlin is part of the company's globalization efforts.

Xinghuacun Fenjiu is among the top three exporters in China's white liquor industry, said Yuan Maoqing, board chairman of the company.

To date, Xinghuacun Fenjiu's products have been sold to more than 60 countries and regions, through its 50-plus overseas dealers and more than 9,000 outlets in foreign countries.

Li Shu contributed to this story.

Visitors pose for a picture in front of the Xinghuacun Fenjiu showroom. WEN ZHAOYAN / FOR CHINA DAILY



A waterfall, deep valley and centuries-old houses are among the major attractions in Hongni village. LI JIAMING / FOR CHINA DAILY

Scenic village seizes livestreaming to revitalize local tourism industry

By YUAN SHENGGAO

The tourism industry has been one of the hardest-hit sectors in China over the past three years because of the COVID-19 pandemic, with many destinations, especially those in the countryside, gradually disappearing from the list of places that tourists would want to visit.

But this is not the case for Hongni village in Hongtiguan township in southeastern Shanxi's Pingshun county.

Hongni is an emerging rural tourism destination in the southern part of the Taihang Mountains due to its centuries-old houses, soaring cliffs, a deep canyon and a spectacular waterfall.

Literally meaning "rainbow", Hongni is named after the waterfall, which usually forms rainbows when its water spray is bathed by sunshine.

The local tourism industry was affected by the pandemic at the beginning of the outbreak, said Wang Xudong, deputy Party secretary of Hongtiguan township.

He said the industry began to recover rapidly as authorities proposed the use of the internet to promote their tourism attractions and sell local produce.

He said the new operational model was put forward by township Party secretary Cheng Fei, township government head Shen Kaibiao and himself, after studying successful practices of other rural tourism destinations in China.

Under the proposal, Wang Guobao, Party secretary of Hongni village, headed a team of young residents to visit various locales in the country to learn livestreaming and short video production skills.

Back in the village, the young residents used the modern means of marketing to revitalize the village, which has a history dating back more than 600 years.

People from other regions also joined in their ranks. Yang Qian, a girl in her 20s, came to the village in April and decided to stay to develop a career there.

Her short videos feature the landscape, life, history and culture of the village. Through them, she immediately became an internet influencer, garnering more than 100,000 followers.

"The pristine environment, the traditional lifestyle, the daily work on the farms and the preparation of rustic food all proved to be attractive to viewers," Yang said. "Many of them told me that they are making plans to visit the village."

Seeing more people arrive in Hongni to start their livestreaming business with local residents, Zhang Tao, a young entrepreneur from Changzhi, founded a livestreaming company in the village, gathering a group of livestreaming anchors to promote the attractions of the area.

As the village becomes better known to tourists through the internet, Hongni has seen the steady recovery of its tourism industry.

"The number of visitors is increasing and so is the revenue of villagers," village Party chief Wang Guobao said. "Even the small vendors can make big money. An owner of a food stand near the river told me he could earn about 800 yuan ($114.6) a day during the peak season."

Those involved in farming have also benefited from livestreaming promotions.

Fu Guomin is a pepper grower. Copying the experience of others, he made short videos about the entire farming process and put them on Douyin, the Chinese version of TikTok.

"I gathered more than 7,000 followers over the past year," Fu said. "And all of my produce was ordered by dealers even before the harvest."

Wang Guobao said that thanks to the booming livestreaming industry, the village received more than 150,000 visits this year to date and most of the produce grown on farms totaling 40 hectares was sold through the online platforms.

Li Jiaming contributed to this story.

RIGHT TRACK

2023 policy focused on solid recovery

Key Party meeting maps direction, major tasks for development next year

By LI XIANG
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Reviving the COVID-19-battered economy will be a key policy priority for China next year as the top leadership has sent a strong signal to push overall improvement of economic activity and substantially expand domestic demand, economists said on Thursday.

Top policymakers in Beijing have called for better coordination between pandemic containment and economic development while emphasizing the need to stabilize growth, employment and prices to boost the economy. They also pledged to comprehensively deepen reform and opening-up and to strongly spur market confidence.

They made the statement at a meeting of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, presided over by Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, on Tuesday.

The key Party meeting has mapped out the direction and major tasks for China's economic development next year and set the tone for the upcoming Central Economic Work Conference, which is scheduled to be held later this month to outline detailed policy goals for the Chinese economy in 2023.

Economists said that the message from the top leadership is significant in terms of anchoring market expectations and boosting overall consumer confidence, and it is reasonable for China to aim for a GDP growth rate of around 5 percent next year as intensified policy support and optimization of the COVID containment measures will help create an economic rebound.

"We can be more optimistic about China's economy in 2023 after the key Party meeting placed much attention and emphasis on optimizing policies, boosting growth and stimulating business vitality," said Xu Gao, chief economist at BOC International.

Wang Qing, chief macroeconomic analyst at Golden Credit Rating International, said that China's economy will stage a rebound as COVID-induced damage to economic activity will be gradually alleviated. He expects the government to aim for a GDP growth of around 5 percent next year and China's real growth rate for 2023 could exceed 5 percent.

More supportive policies including greater fiscal spending and monetary easing will likely be rolled out next year as Chinese policymakers are determined to bring the growth rate back to a reasonable range and effectively drive up investment and consumption, economists said.

This is reflected in the top leadership's statement at Tuesday's meeting that proactive fiscal policy measures need to be reinforced to improve efficiency, and prudent monetary policy measures need to be precise and forceful. The policymakers also said that efforts should be made to expand domestic demand by fully leveraging the "fundamental role of consumption" and "the key role of investment".

To achieve the goals, most economists expect that China may raise its fiscal budget deficit ratio to 3 percent or higher in 2023.

Lian Ping, chief economist at Zhixin Investment, said that China's economic recovery still faces acute challenges and uncertainties given lingering COVID-19 impacts. He said there is justification for China to push for more proactive fiscal policy given the country's reasonable debt level and overall leveraging ratio.

"China may need to raise the fiscal budget deficit to around 3.2 percent next year in order to intensify fiscal support and improve its effectiveness," Lian said.

Wen Bin, chief economist at China Minsheng Bank, said that China will likely roll out more accommodative monetary policy measures in 2023 and may further cut interest rates and banks' reserve requirement ratio at an appropriate time next year.

At Tuesday's meeting, the top leadership also vowed to advance high-quality opening-up and make greater efforts to attract and utilize foreign capital.

Gu Xueming, president of the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, said that given rising uncertainties in the global economic recovery, China's pledge to advance high-quality opening-up reflects its strategic determination, market potential and policy effectiveness, which play a significant role in boosting overall market confidence.

A stand of TikTok during the 23rd Frankfurt Book Fair, Germany, earlier this year. AFP

TikTok extends lead in ad pack

By FAN FEIFEI
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TikTok, a short-video app under Chinese tech firm ByteDance, is expected to ride out the global advertising slowdown, with the social media platform likely to double its advertising revenue in 2022, a new report said.

The report, released by GroupM — a media investment company owned by global advertisement and public relations agency WPP — attributed TikTok's success to decreasing demand from advertisers for its rivals like Meta and Snap.

Microsoft, however — which is considered to be less of a direct competitor to TikTok — has not witnessed such a notable drop in ad revenue, it said.

GroupM predicts global ad revenue growth will reach 6.5 percent this year, compared with its June forecast of 8.4 percent, given the downward worldwide economic pressure. The company also expects the ad industry to grow 5.9 percent in 2023.

China's advertising sector is dominated by the internet, the report said, estimating that more policies aimed at boosting the economy are expected going forward and ad revenue growth in China will stand at 6.3 percent next year.

TikTok generated nearly $4 billion in revenue in 2021, mostly from advertising, and its revenue is expected to reach $12 billion this year, according to research firm eMarketer.

Online video ads are expected to generate over $331 billion in 2027, 37 percent of which will belong to just one company — TikTok — data from market consultancy Omdia showed.

"Advertisers are beginning to move away from Meta and YouTube and toward TikTok to reach their vast follower base," said Maria Rua Aguete, senior director in Omdia's media and entertainment practice group.

Ad revenue from TikTok is expected to exceed Facebook's parent company Meta and video streaming platform YouTube's combined video ad revenues by 2027, according to Omdia.

TikTok has overtaken other social media platforms to become the most popular place to watch videos in the United States, Aguete said. "Our research showed TikTok leapfrogged Netflix to become the second most popular app in the US, with only YouTube retaining the crown for under 35s viewing."

Omdia said TikTok has gained in popularity among young consumers, a sought-after demographic by advertisers. This market has been traditionally hard to reach via channels such as traditional linear TV and other social networks.

"TikTok's journey has been very interesting and it's clear that their model works. This is a platform which offers a huge audience reach and potential to advertisers which cannot be ignored," Aguete said.

A pullback in advertising spending cramped YouTube's revenue in the third quarter, with Google's video platform notching $7.07 billion in ad sales, a decline of 1.9 percent from a year earlier, representing its first year-on-year drop in at least two years.

After a strong start in 2022, worldwide advertising spending growth slowed significantly in the second half amid global economic uncertainty. Nevertheless, ad revenue is likely to grow by almost 7 percent this year to $795 billion, said global media investment and intelligence company Magna.

Magna said global social media ad revenue will likely grow by just 4 percent to $149 billion in 2022 amid multiple headwinds, such as peaking reach and usage alongside brand safety concerns, a far cry from the growth rates of 20 percent to 35 percent observed in the previous two years.

TikTok is the only social media owner to post advertising growth, while incumbent social networks are suffering flat or declining ad sales, especially in Europe and North America. Meanwhile, Magna expects social media ads to re-accelerate and increase by 7 percent in 2023.

China is the world's second-largest ad market, accounting for 15 percent of global advertising revenue, and ad revenue from China is expected to rise 7 percent on a yearly basis to $128 billion in 2023, Magna said.

Briefly

Textile, apparel exports log steady growth

China's exports of textile and apparel products registered a steady expansion in the first 10 months of this year, official data showed. The country's textile exports were worth $125.7 billion during the period, up 6.9 percent year-on-year, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology said. China's exports of apparel and accessories rose 6.4 percent year-on-year to $147.6 billion, within which apparel exports hit $130.4 billion, up 10.3 percent year-on-year. China's major textile enterprises saw their combined operating revenue climb 1.6 percent year-on-year to top 4.28 trillion yuan in the January-October period.

Guangxi high-speed railway starts ops

A high-speed railway in South China's Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region has started operations after four years of construction, facilitating the region's links with economies of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. The Nanning-Chongzuo section, spanning 119.3 kilometers and partially built by China Railway No 4 Engineering Group Co Ltd since December 2018, is part of the 201-km Nanning-Pingxiang HSR. Pingxiang is a county-level city under prefecture-level Chongzuo, while Nanning is the regional capital of Guangxi. Some 5,800 CREC4 builders participated in building the section, which is expected to help bolster China-ASEAN trade.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

Shanghai set to get gas from Russia

By LIU YUKUN and ZHENG XIN

With the commissioning of the Tai'an-Taixing section, the eastern route of the China-Russia natural gas pipeline completed construction on Wednesday, which will allow natural gas from Russia to cross nine provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions to reach Shanghai, ensuring energy supplies for China's eastern regions.

Experts said the project's completion marks a new milestone in China-Russia energy cooperation, and the two countries will forge an even closer partnership to ensure energy security.

The Tai'an-Taixing section is 750 kilometers long with a designed annual gas transmission volume of 18.9 billion cubic meters. When put into operation, the section can link up with China's West-to-East Gas Pipeline in Taixing, Jiangsu province, and increase the supply capacity of natural gas in the Yangtze River Delta region by about 50 million cubic meters per day.

China Oil & Gas Pipeline Network Corp, also known as PipeChina, which built the project, said the completion of the eastern route will continue to improve the energy supply capacity of the northeastern region.

The route will also diversify energy supply channels of the Bohai Economic Rim area, alleviating the region's dependence on imported liquefied natural gas, and reduce the cost of gas consumption in the area.

Meanwhile, through the connection with China's West-to-East Gas Pipeline, gas supplies to the Yangtze River Delta will form a four-way pattern from the east, west, south and north, which will effectively improve transportation ability of the natural source, PipeChina said.

Duan Zhaofang, director of the natural gas market research department at the Economics and Technology Research Institute, which operates under the aegis of China National Petroleum Corp, said the completion of the eastern route will help ensure natural gas supply to provinces alongside the route, especially those with a big need for energy, like Shandong and Jiangsu provinces.

Duan also said that by increasing clean energy supplies, the route will help optimize the energy consumption structure, promote the green transformation of the energy industry and help achieve China's green goals.

Li Ziyue, an analyst with BloombergNEF, shared similar views, adding the commissioning of the Tai'an-Taixing section connects Russian gas to Jiangsu province, China's industrial heartland. This will add another gas source to the gas consumption center in eastern China.

When the line reaches Shanghai, it will further promote energy transition and reduce carbon emissions.

With a total length of 5,111 km, the eastern route has transported over 28 bcm of natural gas so far. By 2025, it will supply 38 bcm of natural gas per year to regions like the three provinces in Northeast China, the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region and the Yangtze River Delta area, which will help reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 164 million metric tons and sulfur dioxide emissions by 1.82 million tons per year.

"The route is the first gas pipeline between the two countries. More pipelines are expected to be commissioned as China and Russia deepen energy cooperation on the Power of Siberia 2 Pipeline under negotiation and other projects," Li said.

According to the General Administration of Customs, Russia continued to be China's largest source of energy imports last year.

China's energy imports from Russia reached 334.29 billion yuan ($46.62 billion) in 2021, up 47.4 percent year-on-year, accounting for 65.3 percent of the total value of China's imports from Russia in the same period.

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British chamber welcomes new COVID efforts; firms cutting risks

By LIU ZHIHUA
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The British Chamber of Commerce in China has welcomed the Chinese government's recent optimization of COVID-19 policies.

During an online media launch of the organization's annual report on business sentiment in China on Thursday, Julian MacCormac, chair of the chamber, said: "The measures that have recently been announced are very, very welcome. It's something that we as a chamber have been asking for — greater clarity, measures to really help us understand first what the business environment will be like next year, and that's really what members have been calling for. We've got commitment to act. That's very, very welcome."

His remarks follow China's further changes to its COVID-19 control policies, effected through a 10-point notice released on Wednesday.

High-risk areas should be accurately defined by building, unit, floor and household, and must not be arbitrarily expanded to entire residential complexes and neighborhoods. Any form of temporary lockdowns is prohibited, the notice stated.

The new measures have also reduced scenarios requiring mandatory nucleic acid tests, including for people traveling within the country.

They also allow infected people with mild or no symptoms to quarantine at home.

According to MacCormac, the new measures present very positive changes.

Besides, as the virus is believed to have become less serious in terms of its impact, provided people are vaccinated, the chamber hopes that the impact of COVID-19 infections on businesses will not be as significant as it has been so far, he said.

Businesses, however, need to manage potential new risks from any possible rise in infections carefully, he said.

Companies are also actively studying approaches used overseas and whether they could be adopted in China, he said.

The chamber's business sentiment report, based on a survey conducted from Oct 12 to Nov 4, showed businesses continue to be impressed by China's market potential, demand in China for British products, and the opportunity to provide unique product offerings — key reasons that underpin their commitment to the China market.

British businesses continue to view technological innovation as the area of greatest opportunity in China. Some 48 percent of the respondents of the survey said they see the China factor having a positive impact on their business next year. The corresponding figure in the previous survey was lower at 45 percent.

China's progress on decarbonization is similarly viewed highly favorably, moreso among large multinationals that are more likely to have the resources and expertise to better tap into this long-term trend, the report said.

A Jaguar car on display during an expo in Shanghai.
ZHANG WEI / CHINA DAILY

BUSINESS

China, ASEAN give push to go green

'Broad cooperation space' highlighted by officials in promoting clean development

By **OUYANG SHIJIA**
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China is willing to work with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to promote green and low-carbon development, as part of the country's larger drive to make continuous contributions to global sustainable development, officials said on Thursday.

Su Wei, deputy secretary-general of the National Development and Reform Commission, highlighted the importance of promoting green, low-carbon and sustainable development, saying China and ASEAN member economies share a broad cooperation space.

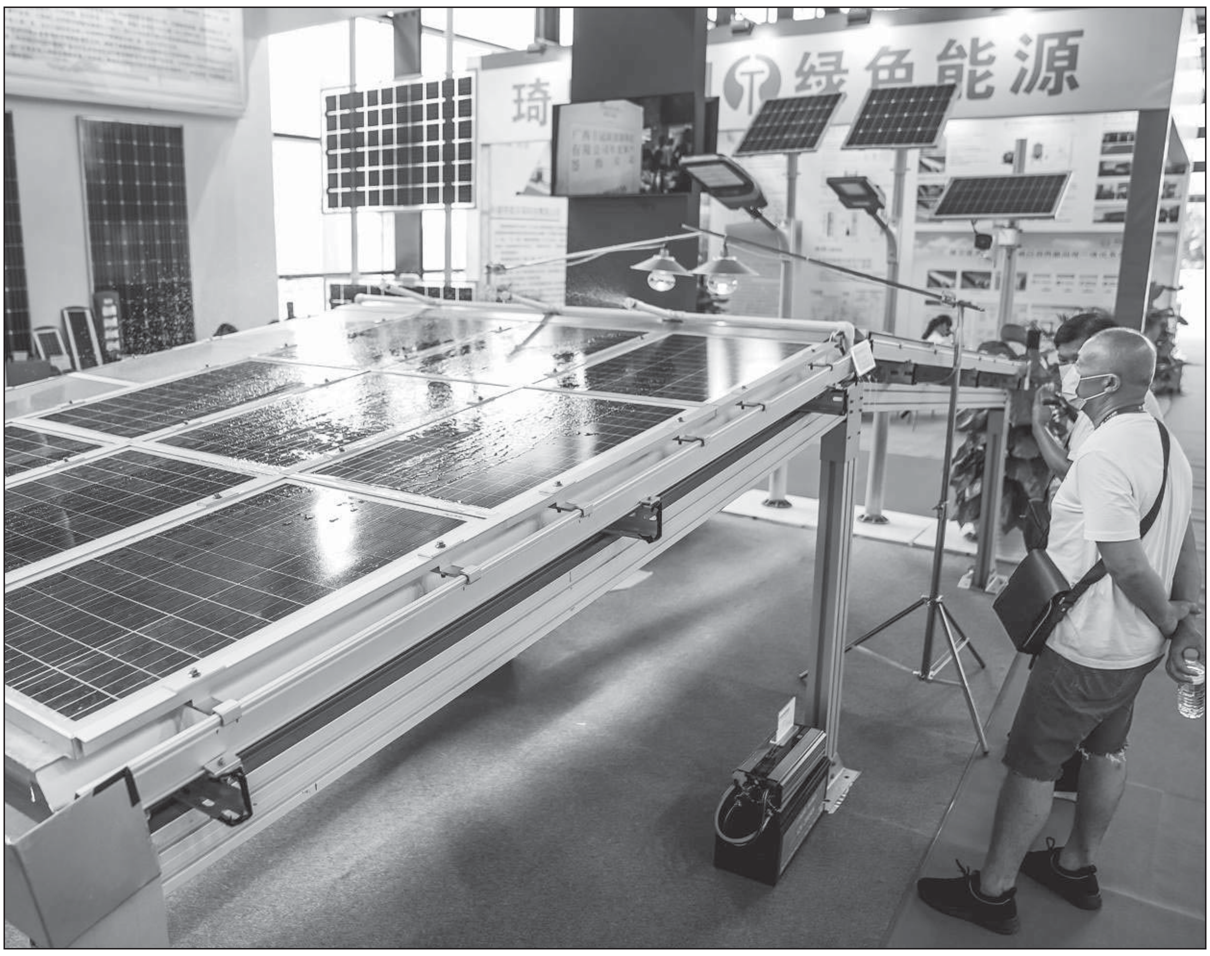
He said the two sides need to give full play to their complementary advantages in green and low-carbon development, enhance cooperation in fields such as green technologies, equipment and services, encourage enterprises to carry out green project cooperation and implement a batch of key green projects in terms of electricity, environmental protection, transportation and infrastructure construction.

More efforts should also be made to conduct regular international seminars on China-ASEAN low-carbon financing cooperation, strengthen the sharing of information and experiences in the field of green development and strengthen green finance cooperation between China and ASEAN member states.

Su made the remarks at the ASEAN-China International Workshop on Low Carbon Investments Cooperation held on Thursday. Taking place both online and offline, the workshop was co-organized by the NDRC's Belt and Road Initiative Center, ASEAN Centre for Energy and the Energy Foundation China.

After years of development, China has become the world's largest energy producer, building a diversified and clean energy supply and making considerable progress in its green transformation.

So far, China's installed capacity of renewable energy generation has surpassed 1.1 billion kilowatts, nearly four-fold more than a decade ago and accounting for over 30 percent of the world's total installed capacity of renewable energy. China's installed capacity for hydropower, wind, solar and biomass power generation has gained top spots worldwide.



Visitors check out rooftop photovoltaic panels during the China-ASEAN Expo in Nanning, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, in September 2021. CHEN GUANYAN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

> "We are willing to work with ASEAN to enhance cooperation on the development and application of energy technologies as well as green investment and financing."
>
> **Liu Qiong,** deputy director of the NDRC's Department of Resource Conservation and Environmental Protection

Looking ahead, Liu Qiong, deputy director of the NDRC's Department of Resource Conservation and Environmental Protection, said China will ramp up efforts to continuously promote green and low-carbon energy transformation, with a key focus on supporting the clean and efficient use of coal, promoting the development of hydrogen and other renewable energies, promoting energy conservation and improving energy efficiency, embracing the green-tech revolution and actively participating in international energy cooperation.

Warning challenges from a cloudy global outlook and mounting uncertainties, Liu called for international cooperation in promoting green and low-carbon energy transformation on a global scale.

"ASEAN countries have rich energy resources, while China can offer technologies and equipment. We are willing to work with ASEAN to enhance cooperation on the development and application of energy technologies as well as green investment and financing," Liu said.

In response, Dadan Kusdiana, director-general of New Renewable Energy and Energy Conservation at the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources of Indonesia, said the country appreciates the progress of ASEAN-China energy cooperation and supports China's commitment to continue cooperation in the ASEAN regions through the facilitation of renewable energy development and the deployment of emerging low-carbon energy technologies.

He said ASEAN must develop proper and effective policy outcomes to embrace more low-carbon energy infrastructure programs.

He said Indonesia hopes that ASEAN-China cooperation will continually address financing and investment issues of clean energy technology in the region, and the collaboration of ASEAN and China could support the enhancement of energy security.

In 2020, ASEAN became China's largest trading partner for the first time, making the two sides each other's largest trading partners.

In the first 11 months, ASEAN's trade volume with China accounted for 15.4 percent of the country's total foreign trade.

Guangzhou moves major textile biz to Qingyuan

By **QIU QUANLIN** in Guangzhou
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Textile and garment accessories processing and manufacturing businesses in an industrial base in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, will be moved northward to Guangdong's Qingyuan as a bid to enhance in-depth industrial cooperation between the two cities, according to local authorities.

After more than 30 years in development, the industrial base, near Sun Yat-sen University, has become one of the leading trade markets for textiles and garment accessories in the country, with an estimated annual trading volume exceeding 200 billion yuan ($28.65 billion), according to a local government source.

However, a lack of reasonable industrial planning remained a big problem at the base, said Huang Fuwei, deputy district head of Haizhu in Guangzhou.

The Kanglu area in Haizhu district, where the textile base is located, was also hit by the latest COVID-19 resurgences.

Operations of textile businesses within the area have yet to resume, following the lifting of closed-off management measures against the pandemic across the city, according to sources with the Textile Industrial Association of Sun Yat-sen University International Innovation Valley.

"The scale of textile and garment processing plants in the district is generally small, with development prospects being limited due to restrictions of urban space and other factors such as firefighting conditions," said Huang.

> "We will jointly build a modern textile industrial cluster, which is expected to be a demonstration site for industries ..."
>
> **Huang Fuwei,** deputy district head of Haizhu in Guangzhou

Huang said the Guangzhou base will develop into the headquarters for research and incubation in the near future, while Qingyuan will be a major area for textile and garment accessories processing and manufacturing.

"We will jointly build a modern textile industrial cluster, which is expected to be a demonstration site for industries being transferred from the prosperous Pearl River Delta region to other areas," said Huang during a recent industrial promotion meeting held in Guangzhou.

The first group of textile processing and manufacturing businesses will be encouraged to move to Qingyuan, after a series of preferential policies such as reducing and exempting fees for renting plants, providing dormitories and apartments free of charge and offering subsidies for the purchase of equipment are announced, Huang added.

Such businesses will be moved to a modern technology center in Qingyuan, about a one-hour drive north of Guangzhou, with a planned construction area of more than 666 hectares.

Designed by the China Textile Planning Institute of Construction, the center, inside a special economic cooperation zone between the two cities, will be built into an industrial cluster dominated by textiles and clothing, with fashion industries such as cosmetics, leather goods and bags as goods produced.

"Textile processing and manufacturing businesses from Guangzhou will have advantages in terms of industrial space and costs when they are transferred to Qingyuan," said Pan Haitao, director of the Qingyuan Bureau of Commerce.

The operating costs in land use, transportation, water and electricity are only 60-70 percent of those in the prosperous Pearl River Delta region, Pan said.

Nation plays bigger role in new display industry

By **FAN FEIFEI**
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China has become an important engine driving the development of global semiconductor display technologies, which have immense application potential in a wide range of fields such as vehicle-mounted displays, wearable gadgets, culture and education, and healthcare, industry experts said.

According to a report released by market research firm CCID Consulting, the revenue of China's display industry exceeded 580 billion yuan ($83.2 billion) in 2021, up 40.5 percent year-on-year, accounting for 36.9 percent of the global display market.

The country's annual production capacity of display panels has reached 200 million square meters this year, ranking first globally, which has greatly promoted the application in smartphones, televisions, laptops, tablets and other display devices.

In addition, China's new display industry has witnessed rapid growth, with the compound annual growth rate reaching 25.8 percent from 2012 to 2021.

The new display industry mainly includes organic light-emitting diodes (OLED) displays and micro/mini light-emitting diodes (micro/mini LED) displays. Compared with traditional liquid crystal displays, the new display technologies have great improvements in terms of image contrast, brightness and color spectrum, thus further accelerating the upgrade of the display industry, experts said.

Wang Jiangping, vice-minister of industry and information technology, emphasized the significance of leveraging new display technologies to bolster economic growth and supporting enterprises to expand the application in vehicle-mounted devices, smart homes, virtual reality and other emerging sectors.

Wang made the remarks at the 2022 World Conference on Display Industry, which was held from Nov 30 to Dec 1 in Chengdu, capital of Sichuan province.

More efforts are needed to continuously enhance the resilience of the industrial and supply chains, make breakthroughs in core technologies of the new display industry and consolidate the enterprises' prominent role in propelling technological innovation, Wang added.

Liu Wenqiang, deputy head of CCID Consulting, said the new display industry, which serves as the terminal in the information age and a key field of the digital economy, is a basic, forward-looking and strategic industry.

"As the world's largest panel manufacturing base, and research, development and application area, China has become an important engine bolstering the development of the global display industry," Liu said, adding that display technologies have empowered several fields like consumer electronics, digital cultural innovation and digital healthcare.

Flexible OLED is a relatively new technology and part of the recent innovations in the display industry. Chinese display panel supplier Visionox Technology Inc is focusing on cutting-edge flexible OLED technology and has launched a series of medium-sized display products including tablets, laptops and vehicle-mounted screens.

An employee answers queries on a notepad with a curved screen during a high-tech expo in Chengdu, Sichuan province, in November. HUA XIAOFENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Xu Fengying, vice-president and chief operating officer of Visionox, said the shipment of foldable phones equipped with flexible OLED display screens is expected to surpass more than 100 million units by 2028, representing a compound annual growth rate of 34 percent.

China will overtake South Korea to become the biggest OLED manufacturer by 2024, as more Chinese companies have invested heavily in new OLED production lines, said Zhou Hua, chief analyst at CINNO Research, a Chinese flat panel display consultancy.

Sigmaintell Consulting, a Beijing-based market research firm, showed that global shipments of flexible OLED panels are expected to reach 405 million units in 2022, with Chinese display makers accounting for about 36 percent of the market share.

Statistics from the consultancy showed that global shipments of foldable smartphones surged 171.9 percent on a yearly basis to about 7.21 million units in 2021, and the figure is foreseen to reach 14.4 million units this year, an increase of 99.6 percent year-on-year.

Li Yaqin, general manager of Sigmaintell, said demand for flexible OLED panels used in foldable smartphones will continue to rise on the back of 5G commercial applications and panel makers should further improve their yield rate capacities and reduce production costs.

"The penetration rate of OLED displays in the mobile market is expected to reach 50 percent by 2024," Li said, adding that about 60 to 70 percent of sales revenue will be contributed by OLED technologies by then.

BUSINESSFOCUS

Motorcycle popularity begins to accelerate

Starting as better commuting option, two-wheeled conveyances now becoming passion for many people

By LIU YUKUN
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Li Dezhi, 38, is a CEO by day and a motorcycle enthusiast at night. The exhilarating sound of the engine, he said, frees him from the pressure of work and everything else.

"My mind is stimulated the moment I squeeze the clutch. Although I may be riding on the East Fourth Ring Road in Chaoyang district, I'm dreaming of riding on dirt across mountains and deserts," he said.

Li isn't the only one who rides to help slake their thirst to be in the countryside, especially since long-distance travel has been curtailed for months for city dwellers due to the resurgences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The number of people who ride motorcycles for commuting and entertainment has been expanding. That, plus the surging popularity of food delivery, has provided an impetus for the rise of the motorcycle industry.

In Beijing, there were 120,028 people who applied for a motorcycle driver's license in the first half of the year, accounting for about 45 percent of all driver's license applicants, according to State broadcaster China Central Television.

Nationally, 5.34 million motorcycles were newly registered for use in the first half of this year, an increase of 1.08 million or 25.38 percent compared with the number of the same period last year, according to the Ministry of Public Security.

The increasing popularity of motorcycles has also spurred business opportunities in sectors like apparel, accessories and sporting clubs. A report by Shenzhen, Guangdong province-based research institute Zero Power Intelligence Group said that the trend helped support a $20 billion domestic market last year, accounting for nearly 20 percent of the world's total.

"The first impression I had of motorcycle riding was that it's convenient for commuting," said 28-year-old Beijing resident Wu Zhao.

Wu said he was motivated to switch from cars to motorcycles by the surge in gas prices in the spring. "It also makes it easier and cheaper to park in Beijing — such a crowded city."

Another Beijing resident, Liu Yifan, 32, said riding a motorcycle is beneficial in many other ways.

"Commuting to work takes me about three hours by subway per day. It's quite difficult to get a vehicle registration plate for a car in Beijing — I have applied for more than five years yet still can't get one. Electric bikes need to be charged frequently to cover the distance I need to go. Motorcycles turned out to be an ideal substitute," Liu said.

After a month, Liu said she came to think of motorcycle riding as a sport. "Riding on a replica racing motorcycle gives me a mixed feeling of exhilaration and fear, but also relaxation, which helps me to deal with work and the pressures of life, especially when faced with a COVID-19 resurgence."

Many people like Liu who took up motorcycles as a convenient method of transportation during the pandemic also discovered that their two wheels provided a release for their urge to go to wild, untamed areas. In 2020, the first year of the spread of COVID-19, the number of newly registered motorcycles surged 43 percent annually to 8.26 million. That number grew 21.67 percent year-on-year to 10 million last year, said the Ministry of Public Security.

On social media platforms, topics related to motorcycles have become a new way to drive traffic. On Xiaohongshu alone, there were more than 850,000 motorcycle-related posts as of late November. The total number of views of motorcycle-related videos on short-video platform Douyin reached 69 billion by late November.

Liu said the looks of a motorcycle rider are also important. She said people click and comment when she posts pictures of the outfit she wears when riding.

"It can be expensive. I buy two or three leather coats a year, with each running about 3,000 yuan ($430), several pairs of trousers that each cost around 1,000 yuan, several hundred for gloves and over 1,000 yuan for a helmet. Spending on this hobby can add up to tens of thousands of yuan a year," she said.

Even spending on small things can add up. The market for helmets in China is expected to reach about 2 billion yuan by the end of this year, according to Market Monitor, a consulting firm in Changsha, Hunan province.

Li, CEO and head of a sports accessory business and an outdoor adventure veteran, is planning a new line to sell off-road motoring equipment to tap another growing market.

He now runs a company called Aosheng Extreme Distributor, which carries equipment for skiing and other sports.

"I started the business selling ski equipment two decades ago. At that time, the sport was not as well known, so our customer base was just a few hundred skiers in Beijing. But now, we are selling to numerous buyers and about 90 distributors across the country," Li said.

"The motorcycle sector is about to take off. We want to grab the opportunity and are confident about our prospects," he added.

Above: A father and his son both take part in motorcycle training in Beijing in May.
WEI XIAOHAO / CHINA DAILY

Left: Motorcycle enthusiasts show their riding skills during an international motorcycle trade expo in Chongqing in November.
CHEN CHAO / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

> Riding on a replica racing motorcycle gives me a mixed feeling of exhilaration and fear, but also relaxation ..."
>
> **Liu Yifan,** a 32-year-old motorcycle enthusiast in Beijing

An Fuxiu, founder of Sportbank, a Beijing-based sports industry think tank, said the growing popularity of motorcycles has helped many types of business such as training, apparel and accessories, competition organizations and outdoor activities such as mountain motorcycling.

According to online retailer JD, the motorcycle category saw a better-than-expected performance in this year's 618 shopping event, the largest mid-year shopping festival in China, with motorcycle sales increasing 106 percent year-on-year, helmets up 202 percent and other motorcycle equipment up 280 percent.

"Some fans want to modify their motorcycles. Those who like retro styles might replace the light and handles, those who pursue individuality may change their motorcycles' color and those who care more about the machine's configurations will increase the displacement, etc. Other modifications to motorcycles are also spurring a market," Liu said.

There is much more to spend money on. Liu said she had just parted with some 300,000 yuan to buy a motorcycle plate with a number preceded by "Jing A".

"Beijing's motorcycle license plates are divided into two types: numbers starting with Jing A and those starting with Jing B. Only motorcycles with the Jing A plate can be ridden throughout the city (except for roads such as the Chang'an Avenue and its extension), but issuance of that plate has long since been halted. So now, Jing A motorcycle license plates are traded for a high price," Liu said.

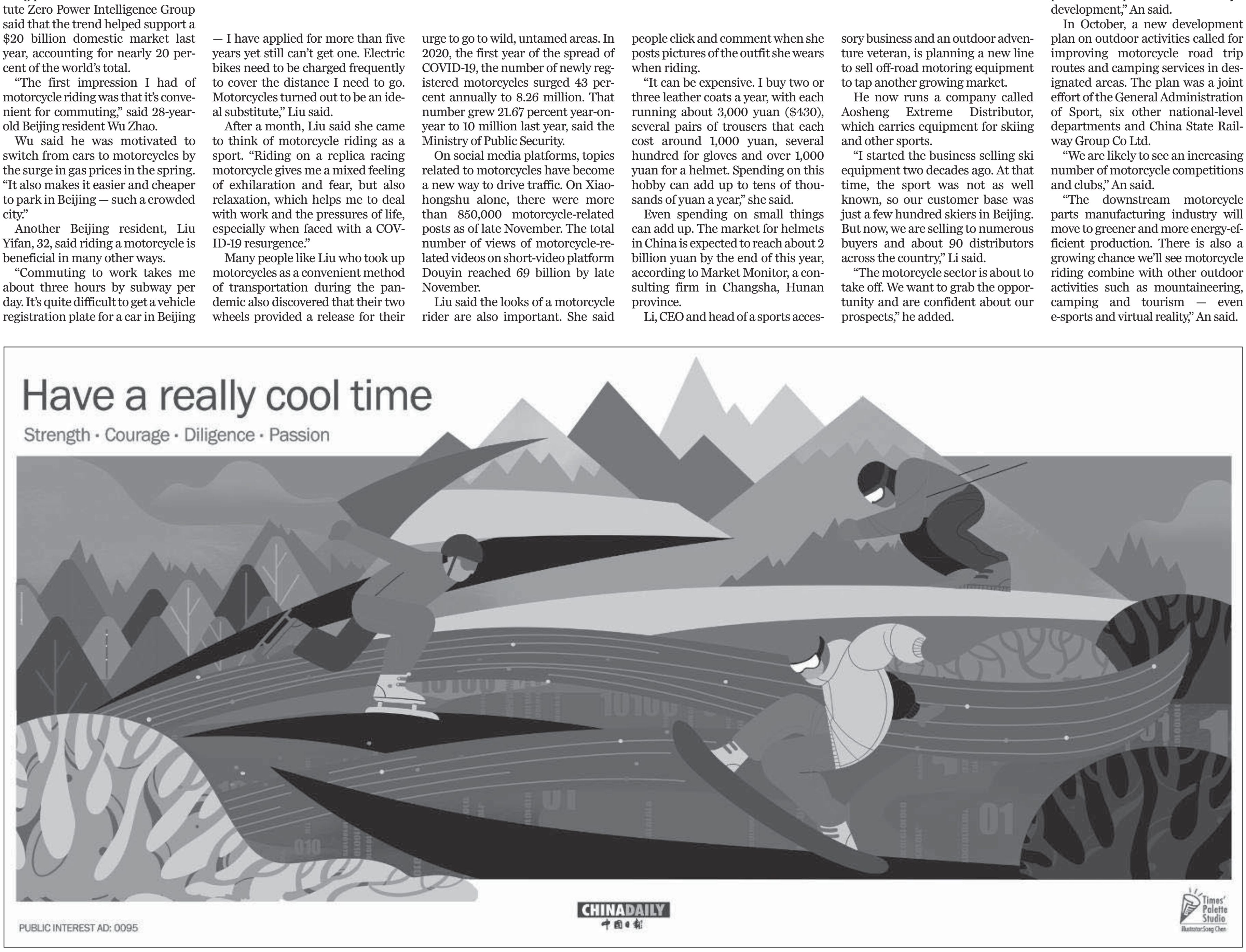
There were over 1.4 million companies whose businesses are related to motorcycling as of early September, according to Qichacha, a corporate information provider. There were 148,000 new registrations of motorcycle-related companies in the first half of 2022, up 52.6 percent year-on-year.

"The motorcycle sporting sector presents good development opportunities. But in order to achieve long-term development, more efforts are needed to create a relatively mature industry system. Government support will also promote the industry's development," An said.

In October, a new development plan on outdoor activities called for improving motorcycle road trip routes and camping services in designated areas. The plan was a joint effort of the General Administration of Sport, six other national-level departments and China State Railway Group Co Ltd.

"We are likely to see an increasing number of motorcycle competitions and clubs," An said.

"The downstream motorcycle parts manufacturing industry will move to greener and more energy-efficient production. There is also a growing chance we'll see motorcycle riding combine with other outdoor activities such as mountaineering, camping and tourism — even e-sports and virtual reality," An said.



LIFE

Ancient kingdom reveals its secrets

Ruins shed light on advanced civilization that offers clues to formation of country, **Deng Zhangyu** reports.

From 5,300 to 4,300 years ago, people from the late Neolithic period moved to a marshland in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, and settled there to grow rice. They built a complicated dam system and set up a megacity, featuring a unified belief system that lasted for almost 1,000 years.

The glorious civilization at the Liangzhu site in Hangzhou is considered a key clue to the origins of China's 5,000-year civilization, especially after UNESCO inscribed the Archaeological Ruins of Liangzhu City on its World Heritage List in 2019.

"Liangzhu site is well-preserved," says Liu Bin, a veteran archaeologist who discovered Liangzhu city in 2006. "The archaeological achievements in the past decades are enough to demonstrate a civilization that was as glorious as that in ancient Egypt."

Liu's latest book on excavations at the Liangzhu site was published in July.

In 1986, Liu took part in an excavation that unearthed hundreds of exquisite jade articles at high-level cemeteries near Liangzhu city. It unveiled a mature jadeware production industry in Liangzhu culture and also a stratified society.

Two decades later, the veteran discovered ruins of the city walls, and a well-organized capital city of a regional state in the late Neolithic period was unveiled to the public. Ruins of the complicated water conservancy system were found later from 2009 to 2013. It's the first hydraulic project ever found in China from Neolithic times.

"Liangzhu culture has production chains of jade, pottery and stone, a smart dam system, and a city that was well-built on marshland. It gives the world a good example of civilization along the Yangtze River," Liu says.

Wang Ningyuan, a researcher with the Zhejiang Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology, says that the standards used to define a civilization in China are inspired by the Liangzhu site. In the West, scripts are seen as a key standard of a civilization. However, China regards the appearance of a kingdom as the standard.

Evidence of scripts in Liangzhu culture has not yet been found. But, archaeological projects, beginning in 1936, at the site have proved that a developed kingdom existed. Wang says the unique characteristic that makes Liangzhu culture stand out from others is its sophisticated dam system, the first ever of its kind at the time.

"The dams were designed and finished before the capital city was built, which means the prehistoric people had a detailed city plan to build public utilities," says Wang, who is in charge of the archaeological project focusing on the ancient water conservancy system.

Based on experimental testing of the ruins found at the dams, it is believed that they were built roughly 5,000 to 4,950 years ago. It is thought that the system was designed to transport goods, protect against floods and irrigate rice fields. The city wall was built 200 years later.

"I'm shocked by the sophisticated hydraulic system. People then only used very simple tools. I can't imagine how they made it," says Wang. He started work at the site in 2000 and was the one who first discovered the dam.

Wang and his team have discovered more than 30 dams since, and they're far from finished.

The major function of the dams was to transport goods to the capital city that was inhabited by an estimated 20,000 to 30,000 people. At the time, a city housing 5,000 people was regarded as big.

Wang says they found that heavy logs, more than 10 meters in length, were transported through the dam system to Liangzhu city. There were holes in the logs that indicate they were tied together. Heavy stones were also transported via the system.

"It was a very complicated water conservancy system," adds Wang.

Wang says the people of the time seemed experienced at dam building, which means they had produced this type of system before. However, the discovery remains the first of its kind ever unearthed in China.

"To find a dam is much more difficult than to find other relics such as jadeware and pottery. The dams are made using soil and plants and are hard to recognize just by digging pits," he says.

It's common to not find anything, even after digging for a year. This year, for instance, his team only uncovered a piece of pottery.

Wang says the discovery of the dam system at the Liangzhu site may provide a new prospect for archaeologists in China — they might find similar public utilities at other sites.

Prehistoric people in China mainly cultivated rice fields and such types of hydraulic projects were related closely to agriculture.

"Maybe it can become a special archaeological direction in China," says Wang, explaining that at the time, people in the West mainly grew crops that didn't need water irrigation systems like those required by paddy fields. He adds that dams found in the West at that time were very small in scale and used mostly for flood prevention.

The relic park of Laohuling site opened to the public in July. It is situated northwest of Liangzhu city and displays the dams, some of which reach more than 30 meters high.

Last year, the relic park of Yaoshan site opened, where most of the jade pieces were unearthed from tombs of various social levels, including a tomb that is regarded to be that of a ruler. The skill of jadeware production reached a peak in China and Asia in Liangzhu culture, says Wang. It reflected a highly stratified society.

In 1986, a jade piece weighing 6.5 kilograms, called "King of Cong", was found in the tomb of a ruler. The *cong*, a cylindrical item, with squared-off outer corners, is an iconic item in Liangzhu culture. The King of Cong, the biggest of its kind, was too big and heavy to wear, thus demonstrating the status of the tomb's occupant.

A large jade ax — a symbol representing military power — was also found in the tomb. Both the jade ax and *cong* have a special emblem engraved on them: a human-shaped deity riding on an animal, a ubiquitous motif seen on other jade items produced at the Liangzhu site.

"Jade in Liangzhu culture is a medium that unified the whole society. The emblem on it never changed. It had a very stable religious system, lasting for nearly 1,000 years," says Wang.

It also proved that there would have been a ruler that controlled a kingdom where people came from different places. Wang's team found lots of pits that prove there were various jade making workshops in the capital city. Some were made for the lower echelons of society and some for nobles.

Craft workshops flourished at the time, such as those producing items from stone, ceramic and wood.

People living in the city were from different places in China. Some might have come from the central regions and others from the south, according to recent DNA tests on bone fragments found in nearby rivers.

Liangzhu in Chinese means a beautiful isle where lakes and rivers run through the land. Rows of paddy fields were cultivated outside the city. Traces of rice were found in a large store, capable of holding up to 200,000 kg of the crop. It was discovered inside the city.

"It was a very brilliant civilization created by prehistoric people migrating from other places," Wang says.

Yao Huimin's home was in a village about two kilometers away from Liangzhu city. The 36-year-old grew up in the area and witnessed firsthand the unfolding archaeological process of the Neolithic city, which dates back 5,000 years.

A series of tombs were found in her village last year. One — the tomb of a female noble — was discovered next to her house. Yao and other villagers moved out from their houses after the excavation project began.

"I'm breathing the same air and enjoying the same land shared by our ancestors. Life here continues and never stops," says Yao, who works at the Liangzhu site management committee, a government body that is in charge of the management and protection of the Liangzhu site.

Liangzhu city, the relic park of Yaoshan site featuring tombs and a belief system, together with the recently opened relic park of Laohuling site focusing on the dams, offer a comprehensive view of the once glorious civilization to visitors.

According to Yao, the number of visitors to the Liangzhu site reached more than 5 million after 2020, despite the pandemic. It's popular among those who want to discover and learn about the origins of China's civilization.

"The general story of Liangzhu culture is depicted by decades of archaeological work. We will focus on more detailed programs to unveil a vivid civilization," says Wang, the veteran archaeologist who has worked at the site for more than two decades.

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The living past

Editor's note: *A national comprehensive research program, launched in 2002, to trace the origins of Chinese civilization, has led to the excavations and studies of key sites that are about 3,500 to 5,500 years old. It has revealed a host of secrets about ancient China, including how early civilizations were formed and how they merged to create unity in diversity. China Daily speaks to experts working at these sites to decode their recent discoveries.*

From top: A jade disc unearthed at the Liangzhu site that was often used for religious rituals. The emblem of a human-shaped deity riding on an animal was ubiquitous on jade pieces in Liangzhu culture, to show a unified religion system lasting for about 1,000 years. The jade ax found in a ruler's tomb at the Liangzhu site had an emblem of deity engraved on it.

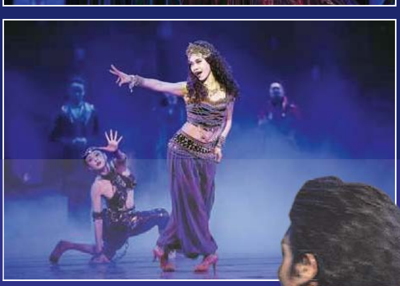
Top: A bird's-eye view of the Liangzhu site in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, where an ancient civilization lived about 5,000 years ago. **Above:** People work at an excavation site that shows the ruins of Liangzhu city. **Left:** Wang Ningyuan, a researcher with the Zhejiang Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology, works at the ruins of a dam system unearthed at the Laohuling site, where the first hydraulic project in China was discovered. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

> The dams were designed and finished before the capital city was built, which means the prehistoric people had a detailed city plan to build public utilities."
>
> **Wang Ningyuan,** archaeologist

LIFESHANGHAI

AN ODE TO A RUSSIAN MASTERPIECE

Chinese version of *Monte Cristo* debuts at the Shanghai Culture Square, **Zhang Kun** reports.



The performances of the Chinese version of *Monte Cristo*, a Russian musical based on the well-known French novel, *The Count of Monte Cristo*, started at the Shanghai Culture Square on Dec 2 and will run until Sunday.

Jointly produced by the Beijing Performance and Arts Group, the Shanghai Culture Square and the Beijing Dance Drama and Opera troupe, the musical will go on a national tour after 12 shows in Shanghai.

With music by Roman Ignatyev and libretto by Yuliy Kim, the Russian musical *Monte Cristo* first premiered in 2008 before being shown for more than 10 years, making it one of the most enduring musical productions in Russia's contemporary theater scene.

The Russian production was presented as the closing show for the Shanghai Spring International Musical Festival at the Shanghai Culture Square in 2012. According to Fei Yuanhong, the deputy general manager of the Shanghai Culture Square, it was possibly one of the first Russian musicals shown in China.

"Chinese audiences have been exposed to Russian culture for a long time, and the narrative flow and emotional expressions in the Russian production are received well in China," Fei says.

Regarding the company's decision to adapt the performance into Chinese two years ago, Dong Ning, deputy general manager of the Beijing Performance and Arts Group, says: "*The Count of Monte Cristo* by French author Alexandre Dumas (1802-70) is such a beloved literary classic that we were all immediately attracted to the project, which is why we quickly brought together a top-notch Chinese creative team."

The new team is the musical troupe established by the Beijing Dance Drama and Opera. Ayanga, one of the most popular musical actors in China, currently heads the team. Besides serving as the producer, the ethnic Mongolian singer is also the leading actor who plays the hero Edmond Dantes in the Chinese version of *Monte Cristo*.

The production employs three cast members for each role. The other two Dantes are played by Yu Yi and Ye Qisheng. The heroine Mercedes is played by Lou Yixiao, Xu Yao and Xu Lidong.

"Edmond is the most challenging role of my career," Yu says. "The songs are difficult, and yet the fully charged emotional expressions are very satisfying. It is a production that any musical actor would regret not being a part of."

In the story, Dantes is an innocent young sailor who is framed and imprisoned for 14 years. He later returns to Paris with the treasure he found on the island of Monte Cristo and proceeds to carry out his plans of revenge on those who framed him.

Alina Chevik, the director of the original Russian production, and choreographer Irina Korneeva oversaw the creative process of the Chinese edition remotely, via web conferences.

The dancers of the Beijing Dance Drama and Opera, as well as four professional acrobats, also helped to ensure the high quality of the show.

After watching the show in Shanghai, veteran playwright Luo Huaizhen comments that the production of outstanding musical actors have been the greatest achievement in the decades-long development of the country's musical industry. Their performances are as good as any international productions, Luo says.

"China's musical theater is set to usher in great prosperity. It has adequate venues and a large audience who is hungry for new productions and armed with in-depth knowledge about musicals. In leading markets such as Beijing and Shanghai, the production and marketing system has become well-established, too," he says.

"What China needs now is creative talent, from playwrights and composers to directors and stage designers. We need significant progress in nurturing the creative strength to further develop domestic musical productions," he adds.

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The Chinese version of Russian musical *Monte Cristo* will run at the Shanghai Culture Square until Sunday.
PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

A mental healing program with coffee, music

By **ZHANG KUN** in Shanghai

The Shanghai Symphony Orchestra and the Shanghai Mental Health Center, also known as the Mental Health Center affiliated to Shanghai Jiao Tong University School of Medicine, recently released a series of products that include 10 packs of blended coffee, with each claiming to be able to address a mental status or problem such as anxiety, depression and insomnia.

Each pack also comes paired with a short piece of symphonic music and a three-minute audio clip of a mental health professional's interpretation of symptoms.

For example, those who scan the QR code on the pack of coffee marked "anxiety" will hear Bach's *Sheep May Safely Graze*, while scanning the pack titled "inferiority complex" will produce sounds of Ravel's *Morning Song of the Jester*.

Developed by the two organizations, the products are aimed at addressing common mental health issues that have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

"We believe music has healing power and can provide emotional support for those in need," explains Qiao Ying, a doctor at the mental health center.

The new products have been an instant hit — the first 5,000 sets of coffee was sold out so quickly that even Xie Bin, the Party secretary of the mental health center, has to wait until mid-December before he can sip the coffee, which he ordered on the WeChat platform of the orchestra.

The Shanghai Symphony Orchestra and the Shanghai Mental Health Center jointly launch a collection of blended coffee.
PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

This is not the first time the mental health center has sold merchandise. The institution previously sold face masks together with Shanghai Museum that were just as popular.

According to Xie, the decision to sell official merchandise came about when the mental health center realized that many online vendors were selling goods that bore the institution's name and address as a joke.

This joke, however, has inadvertently played a role in raising awareness about mental health and eliminating the stigma associated with mental illness, he adds.

"People in China used to be evasive about their mental issues, and they would be afraid to let others know about their visits to mental health specialists," Qiao says. "Today, I have seen children who proudly share their experiences of receiving counseling at our clinics, and other children have responded with feelings of envy and admiration."

Regarding the decision to collaborate with the center, Zhou Ping, director of the orchestra, says that music and other art forms play positive roles in helping people through difficult times.

"We have quite a number of avid symphony lovers who have claimed that a particular piece of music has helped them through their difficulties. This particular piece of music would eventually lead them to other music and composers, until music becomes an indispensable part of their daily life," says Zhou.

"With the introduction of this coffee series we would love to see increased awareness of mental health issues. We would also consider presenting concerts aimed at helping people heal mentally in the future."

Foreigners' volunteer efforts highlight of new exhibition

By **XU XIAOMIN** in Shanghai
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Russian poet and artist Anastasia Podareva is glad to see her self-portrait included as part of the ongoing art exhibition titled *Foreigners But Not Outsiders*, which documents how foreigners lived or contributed to community during the COVID-19 outbreak in Shanghai in the spring.

The painting depicts Podareva holding a color palette in one hand and a painting brush in the other while surrounded by piles of books and ink.

This scene, she says, shows what she was doing every day at home during the outbreak.

"All we need is a strong mind and brave heart," says Podareva, adding that she was deeply moved by the solidarity and determination shown by the residents of Shanghai in face of the outbreak.

The exhibition also features dozens of portraits of foreigners volunteering, donating pandemic prevention materials and participating in efforts to resume work and production in the city.

Created by Shanghai artist Li Shoubai and organized by the Shanghai People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, the exhibition, which opened on Saturday, aims to be a stage for people-to-people exchanges and to encourage people to contribute to the improvement of the friendship between China and other countries.

"I was so touched by the good deeds done by people around the world, so I used the leftover colors at home and completed about 50 paintings for them," says Li. "I believe people doing good deeds will be repaid."

At the exhibition, China Daily's Times' Palette Studio is also showcasing a collection of newspaper illustrations themed on China's cooperation with other nations to fight against the pandemic.

The China-Russia Friendship Salon was held on the same day of the exhibition's opening ceremony, and it saw performances from Chinese pianist Kong Xiangdong, Russian tenor and opera singer Nicholas Shamov and Shanghai International Children's Friendship Chorus.

During this event, Podareva also collaborated with Li to create the painting, *Russian Girl Living in Shanghai Shikumen-style House*.

A visitor at the art exhibition *Foreigners But Not Outsiders* held in Shanghai on Saturday. GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY

Podareva, who goes by the Chinese name Tang Xilan, says the woman featured in this painting is herself, while the cat sitting beside her is Li's favorite pet.

Podareva points out that this painting expresses her impression of Shanghai, which she views as "a city of romance".

Driven by her passion for learning Chinese literature, Podareva came to China after graduating from high school in 2013. She first studied Chinese in Changchun, Jilin province, which has climate that is similar to Russia's.

She later moved to Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, due to her love for its scenery, which, she says is similar to what had been described in ancient Chinese literature, before studying art theory and literature at Zhejiang Sci-Tech University in Hangzhou.

A few years later, she moved to Shanghai where she works as a poet, artist, translator and content producer.

Describing herself as someone obsessed with Chinese culture and poetry, Podareva has written over 200 pieces of poetry in Russian, English and Chinese and published three collections of personal works.

She has also found similarities between Chinese and Russian literature, especially in poems.

"Chinese ancient poems can be sung just like their Russian counterparts," she says.

"Compared with Russian literature, Chinese classical works have more delicate details," she adds.

In the future, she hopes to do more to help increase art exchanges between the two countries.

She says she wants to take the best of Chinese art to Russia while bringing the best of Russian art to Chinese people.

LIFE

Making a moral point

Ancient wisdom helps guide China's modernization drive, particularly through programs dealing with societal development and responsibility, **Ma Zhenhuan** reports in Ningbo, Zhejiang.

Top: Volunteers teach a resident (left) how to access the "Moral Bank" on her phone in Yuyao, Zhejiang province. **Above:** Bank clerks help a resident apply for a loan with his "moral credit" at the Yuyao Rural Commercial Bank. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Even though more than 500 years have passed, the thoughts of Wang Yangming (1472-1529), one of China's leading neo-Confucian philosophers, still live on and exert a profound influence on Chinese people.

Wang was also a calligrapher, military general, politician and writer.

Neo-Confucianism is the revival of the philosophical, social and ethical thoughts of Confucius. Wang is best known for his doctrine of the "unity of knowing and acting". It states that knowledge and action should be combined, and that one can acquire knowledge through actions.

In his principles, the "knowledge" refers to *liangzhi* (innate knowing), the capacity for moral judgement, rather than factual knowledge.

Wang held the idea that everyone knows, from birth, the difference between right and wrong. He claimed that such knowledge is intuitive and not acquired by learning.

Wang trusted in the power of "innate knowing" and believed that there is a sage in everyone, and that it is easy to be a "fully moral agent", because all we need to do is to get rid of selfish human desires. That way, the good will be perceived and evil will be removed.

To commemorate the 550th anniversary of the ancient philosopher's birthday, the World Yangming Philosophy Conference was held in Yuyao and Shaoxing in East China's Zhejiang province in late November.

Revolving around two themes — "cultural resonance in a community with a shared future for mankind" and "Yangming philosophy and common prosperity" — researchers from different disciplines and backgrounds discussed the theories and practices of Wang's philosophy during the conference.

Li Guoqiang, associate dean of Chinese Academy of History, highlighted the application of Wang's thoughts to China's modernization.

He suggested thoughts, such as "innate knowing" and the "unity of knowing and acting", be connected to theories of Marxism, which will be developed into a strong workforce for the modernization drive.

Yang Guorong, president of China Philosophy History Association, stressed the similarities between Wang's thoughts and the idea of common prosperity.

"We can tell from Wang's principles that they intend to make people aware of their responsibilities to society, which reflects the idea of common development," said Yang. "Common prosperity means striving for all people. The idea behind it could be traced back to traditional Chinese culture, including Confucianism. We can also draw inspiration from thoughts, including the 'unity of knowing and acting' and 'innate knowing', to figure out ways to achieve common prosperity."

Zhu Hanmin, vice-chairman of the International Confucian Association, pointed out that China's commitment to building a community with a shared future for mankind to confront challenges, such as political, economic and military issues, is rooted in its traditional culture, especially Wang's belief that all things in the universe were originally one.

"His thought is practical and reveals a humanistic spirit similar to 'a community with a shared future for mankind,'" said Zhu.

Chen Zhiping, president of the Chinese Society on Ming Dynasty History, also insisted that Wang's philosophy is still inspiring in modern times.

"Wang claimed that social governance is based on changing people's thoughts. We can take a page from it when building a community with a shared future for mankind."

In recent years, Yuyao, Wang's birthplace, has been utilizing his thoughts in the city's development by promoting the "Moral Bank" program.

Under the program, moral behaviors of residents are quantified into "moral points". In addition to self-evaluation, different departments, including public security, tax, market regulation and the local banks, and big data technologies, are all involved in the evaluation procedures.

Residents can earn points through activities, such as volunteer services. Those who get the required amount of "moral points" are allowed to get loans at cheaper rates of interest at the Yuyao Rural Commercial Bank. They can also redeem over 300 services, including free parking and discounts on haircuts, with "moral points".

Due to undeveloped infrastructure and disputes between villagers, Shaojiaqiu village in Yuyao was known as a "village of difficulties".

But things have changed since 2012, when the "Moral Bank" was launched in the village and locals were encouraged to start their own businesses and earn "moral points" to get loans.

The bank has offered unsecured loans for 120 households in the village. And villagers have donated more than 10 million yuan ($1.4 million) to infrastructure construction and charitable activities in recent years.

Yu Yin in Ningbo contributed to this story.

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From left: A painting of a vineyard appears on the wall of a house in Shaojiaqiu village of Yuyao; an aerial view of Wang Yangming's former residence in Yuyao; slogans promoting the "Moral Bank" are seen at the entrance of Shaojiaqiu village. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Rural locals welcome a drop in boastful banquets

GUIYANG — Festivals, birthdays, weddings, funerals, housewarmings, graduations of children and so on. Extravagant and wasteful banquets used to be held one after another in rural areas of Southwest China's Guizhou province, imposing burdens on both hosts and attendees.

"I attended over 50 banquets in 2014, for reasons such as celebrating the birth of a child, moving into a new home, and even installing a new door. I spent a total of 5,700 yuan ($799) on gift money, almost one-third of my annual income," says Tao Zhengyan, who is from a village in the Qiandongnan Miao and Dong autonomous prefecture.

In rural areas, a banquet served as a window to the wealth of the hosts. Wealthy households could afford to serve 15 dishes a table and expensive cigarettes worth 50 yuan per packet. Those who served less food and cheap cigarettes may feel the pressure of losing face.

Locations of such banquets caused another headache, as most of them could only be held in open spaces in front of the homes of the hosts, sometimes creating poor sanitary conditions.

To rectify unrestrained, wasteful and unsanitary rural banquets, authorities in Qiandongnan have worked to establish village banquet halls and formulate standards on the scale and budgets of the banquets.

A two-floor banquet hall in Sanmentang village was built in 2020, and is capable of serving 200 guests. After consultation with villagers, the village committee set the rules concerning the scale and expenses of banquets.

Only weddings and funerals are allowed to be hosted at the banquet hall, with no more than 30 tables for each event. For each table, the number of dishes should not exceed 12, with a total price of no more than 200 yuan. Even the price of cigarettes is capped at 13 yuan per packet, and liquor at 20 yuan a bottle.

The number of banquets has plunged since.

Tao attended no more than seven banquets under the new rules, which has greatly eased his debt of gratitude, as he doesn't have to spend as much gift money or worry about hosting banquets in return.

Peng Zewei, 47, a villager with a meager income, held a decent funeral in memory of his mother in the new banquet hall in April.

"I served eight dishes and one hotpot per table, which didn't cause much waste. The guests were pleased with the food," says Peng. The 15-table banquet cost Peng just 4,000 yuan. "While having saved a lot of money, I also didn't feel the social pressure to compare with others."

Tables, chairs and cooking equipment are prepared and no rent fee is needed for the hall. Most banquet halls are run and supervised by village committees. They can also be used for training, conferences, and cultural and social activities.

So far, Qiandongnan has opened 408 village banquet halls, and held over 8,000 banquets, with each banquet saving more than 10,000 yuan on average for the villagers.

XINHUA

How to deal with being sleepless in Beijing

Like a lot of other people, I sometimes have trouble going to sleep.

On the 10th floor, in a spacious apartment in Beijing, there are nights when getting to sleep feels a lot like Sisyphus of Greek mythology, a man cursed by the gods to push a boulder up a hill, only to find it at the bottom again the next day.

Only for me the boulder is sleep, and I regularly watch it roll right back down thinking "nope, you're not getting any shut-eye tonight."

This has happened to me more times than I care to count.

It happens a lot more when Christmas rolls around. Maybe it is the season. Being away from family does not help. I miss all my assorted relatives.

Rene Pastor
Second Thoughts

Coming from a culture where Christmas songs begin playing on the radio in September, spending the time in another country clearly does not help in eliminating the loneliness.

In my room, I toss and I turn. And toss and turn again. The eyelids refuse to fall despite being dead tired. I go to one side of the bed and then the other.

One wit compared it to punching a pillow. You throw a left and then a right. You keep punching and then you end up exhausted, with the pillow staying in the same shape, seemingly laughing in your face.

The appropriately named Sleep Foundation estimates a third of people globally experience unsatisfying sleep.

According to the foundation, "Chronic insomnia is when a person experiences sleeping difficulties and related daytime symptoms, like fatigue and attention issues, at least three days per week for more than three months or repeatedly over years. It is estimated that about 10 percent of people have chronic insomnia disorder."

See, they even have a name for it.

There is a hotline for the problem in another country. It is called the Help Me Sleep Hotline at 1-833-I-Can't-Sleep for a set of tips, meditations and bedtime stories to help you get a good night's rest.

I have not called them, but one day I might.

The Sleep Foundation has listed a set of tips to get some sleep.

"One, maintain the same bedtime and wake time every day, even on weekends. Get out of bed if falling asleep is taking too long or causing anxiety.

"Do not consume caffeine, alcohol, or nicotine, especially near bedtime. Keep the bedroom both dark and quiet. Refrain from watching television before bed. Do not check the clock to see how long it is taking to fall asleep. Avoid eating large meals too close to bedtime."

I've been known to drink coffee at night, paradoxically to relax. I need to watch TV and late in the week, I would go for a big meal to reward myself.

Useful tips, but they're not for everyone.

I still get to sleep, especially when I am totally fried. It's probably the cost of a modern professional life. I know I need my sleep. And I use the weekends to get it.

There is also retirement, when you can opt to sleep at any time of the day if you can afford it. There goes a sleeping pattern.

Thing is, I enjoy binge-watching TV too much to give it up, although that means waiting for several more months before Season 2 of *House of the Dragon* pops up on the television.

Insomnia. You gotta love it.

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SPORTS

FIFA WORLD CUP 2022

Gregarious Van Gaal has Dutch daring to dream

Manager's fun-loving antics belie Netherlands' major hopes of glory

Netherlands coach Louis van Gaal oversees a training session at Qatar University in Doha on Tuesday. The 71-year-old's Dutch team faces Argentina in the World Cup quarterfinals on Saturday. AFP

Louis van Gaal and his wife Truss are pictured following a training session at Qatar University in Doha on Sunday. AFP

> If I have to believe the Dutch media, we'll never become world champion. In 2014, it was exactly the same. Extremely negative. Now it's the same all over again. I am used to it, and I think my players are used to it, so we will calmly move on."
>
> **Louis van Gaal,** Dutch coach

Three wins from the title that has eluded the Netherlands, Louis van Gaal has filled his World Cup with hugs, kisses and dancing.

Leading his nation for the third time at age 71, he is the tournament's oldest coach. He also may be the most dapper, pacing the sidelines in a neon orange tie, dark business suit and dress shoes.

Van Gaal has the Dutch on a 19-game unbeaten streak going into Friday's quarterfinal against Lionel Messi and Argentina. Known as the Iron Tulip, he has entertained off the field as much as his players have on the pitch.

Van Gaal responded to praise from a Senegalese reporter 25 minutes into a news conference with an excited: "Oh, I can hug you. I'll give you a big, fat hug later," according to his translator.

And after the news conference, LVG did just that, beckoning for Papa Mahmoud Gueye to meet him at the side of the stage, then wrapping his arms around the 28-year-old and giving him eight pats on the back followed by a tap on the face.

A few days later, Van Gaal puckered up. He was seated next to Denzel Dumfries, who scored one goal and assisted on two others in the 3-1 win over the United States that put the Dutch in the quarterfinals. A reporter from Aruba asked Van Gaal how proud he was of the defender, who has an Aruban father.

"Yesterday or a day before yesterday, I gave him a big fat kiss. I am going to give him another big fat kiss so everybody can see," the coach said. He leaned over, put an arm around the player and placed a smack near Dumfries' right ear.

A short while later, Van Gaal followed his players on a jubilant dance line while arriving at the St. Regis Doha. Quite different from his demeanor after the 2-0 win over host Qatar, when a Dutch reporter told him the result wasn't enough.

"Of course, you can give your opinion. I don't agree with you and I'm not going to expand on that because I think that you have a different perspective on football than I have," Van Gaal said. "So why don't you write that down, that you think it is terribly boring, that you're going home tomorrow because you couldn't care less?"

Ahead of the US match, he described criticism as a constant.

"If I have to believe the Dutch media, we'll never become world champion," Van Gaal said. "In 2014, it was exactly the same. Extremely negative. Now it's the same all over again. I am used to it, and I think my players are used to it, so we will calmly move on."

Then he added playfully in English: "Maybe you can take now a picture after this declaration."

He smiled and said: "Cheese."

Van Gaal has coached Ajax, Barcelona, AZ Alkmaar, Bayern Munich and Manchester United, winning seven league titles, but he is seeking his first national team championship.

Mindset is as essential as tactics.

"He gives us a lot of confidence, a lot of clarity. Everybody knows what he needs to do," Dumfries said. "He keeps us on our toes and he frankly tells us what needs to be improved."

Sitting next to the player, Van Gaal quickly interjected with a wide smile: "It's not for nothing that we brought Denzel along."

Van Gaal took over the Oranje for the first time in 2000 and quit two years later after they failed to qualify for the 2002 World Cup. He returned in 2012 and coached them at the 2014 World Cup, where Argentina beat the Netherlands on penalties in the semifinals. The Dutch took third with a 3-0 victory over host Brazil, and then he quit for the second time.

Hired in August 2021 to replace Frank de Boer, Van Gaal made the controversial call to give 28-year-old goalkeeper Andries Noppert his national team debut in the team's World Cup opener against Senegal.

"For me what makes it special when you are a good manager or a good coach is that also the players who don't play, you can get a good feeling and to keep fighting for a place in that squad," Noppert said. "It's not easy to not play games and to keep the 100 percent focus."

The Netherlands has the distinction of playing in the most World Cup finals without winning, a wound in the psyche of the Dutch fan base.

"We can become world champions — not that we will become world champions," Van Gaal said. "We can become world champions."

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

German federation sticks by Flick despite finals flop

Germany coach Hansi Flick

BERLIN — Germany's coach is staying, the head of its league is not.

The German soccer federation maintained its trust in Hansi Flick as national team coach on Wednesday despite the disappointing World Cup performance.

Separately, German soccer league chief executive Donata Hopfen will leave her position at the end of the month after reaching a mutual agreement to cut short her three-year contract because of what the league said was "differing ideas about the further strategic direction of the company".

Hopfen's departure — unrelated to the World Cup — after less than a year in charge had been expected amid simmering issues of discontent among Bundesliga clubs and teams from the second division.

Flick's future was more uncertain following Germany's early World Cup exit, its third straight disappointing performance at a major tournament, and the former Bayern Munich coach was under pressure going into Wednesday's meeting with federation president Bernd Neuendorf and vice-president Hans-Joachim Watzke.

Neuendorf said afterward the body has "full confidence" in Flick to lead the team through the 2024 European Championship, which Germany is scheduled to host and which Neuendorf described as a "great opportunity" for the future of soccer in the country.

Flick left the meeting without a word, but was quoted in a statement from the federation.

"We as a team can achieve much more than we showed in Qatar," Flick said in the statement. "We missed a big opportunity there. We'll learn our lessons from it."

Flick said he was optimistic about Euro 2024 and that he has confidence in the path Neuendorf and Watzke agreed to.

"We want all of Germany to rally behind the national team again at the 2024 European Championship at home," said Flick, who faced criticism for his team selection and tactics against group rivals Japan, Spain and Costa Rica in Qatar.

Mistakes in defense, where Flick was unable to settle on his preferred back four, and an inability to put away chances cost Germany a place in the knockout round.

Germany's record under Flick was also poor before the tournament. Flick took over from Joachim Loew last year after Germany's second-round exit from the European Championship and has a contract through Euro 2024.

The federation still needs a replacement for Oliver Bierhoff, who ended an 18-year stint on Monday when he agreed to resign as managing director of Germany's national soccer teams and academy. Bierhoff might not have a direct replacement.

"We have agreed to discuss the future structure of this area of responsibility first within the federation in order to make a decision then on personnel," Neuendorf said.

Bierhoff is the only casualty so far from Germany's group-stage exit from the World Cup in Qatar, the team's second straight embarrassing failure in soccer's biggest tournament. Germany also was eliminated from the same stage at the 2018 World Cup as defending champion.

Hertha Berlin general manager Fredi Bobic was a reported candidate to take over from Bierhoff, though he said Wednesday he was "very comfortable at Hertha". Bobic, who has a contract through 2024 with the Berlin club, did not rule himself out, however.

Flick appeared to criticize the federation for Bierhoff's exit on Tuesday, when he said both he and his coaching staff "are having a hard time imagining how the gap left by Oliver's departure can be closed".

Hopfen took over from Christian Seifert in January as the first female chief executive of Germany's top two soccer divisions but struggled to impose her vision or resolve long-standing questions on issues such as the league's 50+1 rule limiting the role of outside investors, marketing at home and abroad, and the sale of media rights.

Hopfen said in a social media post on Linkedin that she did not receive the support she needed from the league.

"I came into this job, like many before me, from the outside, as a non-player, as a woman with a clear plan on how the league can be led into the future: digitally, internationally and with strong partners and associates," Hopfen said. "Such a transition is a feat of strength and requires courage. For all that you need staying power and the support and joint action of all stakeholders. I didn't feel that anymore in the end."

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Does Spain loss reveal thread of truth in 'Cursed Shirt' phenomenon?

James McCarthy
Extra time

On Tuesday night, Morocco fans were rocking the Kasbah after their team vanquished 2010 champion Spain from the World Cup with an audacious Panenka penalty from Achraf Hakimi.

The Atlas Lions, then, will return home to Casablanca as heroes, regardless of what happens against Portugal, as they have managed to make history for their national team, going a step further than the class of 1986, and giving a historical enemy a bloody nose in the process.

But at what cost? What is likely to be the biggest fallout from this monumental upset? Well, the Spanish had been wearing their stunning light-blue second shirt for this fixture, its first appearance since it was unveiled by Adidas a few weeks prior to the tournament, and I found myself pondering "does this classify as a 'Cursed Shirt'?"

Sport is famously superstitious. Players have their rituals, particularly when they are on a winning streak, as do the fans. But, given the nature of the game, and the regularly changing strips, soccer has developed a unique phenomenon — the Cursed Shirt.

It can be traced as far back as 1950, and Brazil. In the run-up to that year's World Cup, which Brazil was set to host, the team wore an all-white strip to emulate Real Madrid. After losing its home final to continental rival Uruguay, the fans blamed the "unpatriotic" kit and FIFA itself described it as being "associated with mourning and grief". A national competition was held and the winner, incorporating the four colors of the nation's flag, made its debut in 1954 and, 17 World Cups on, is still favored by the Brazilians.

Perhaps one of the most famous examples of the Cursed Shirt is England's change of strip for the 1996 European Championship. After plowing its way, unbeaten, to the semifinals, England faced archenemy Germany for a place in the final, but the draw cast the host as the "away" team, meaning the Three Lions had to wear the now infamous all-gray strip. They went on to agonizingly lose a penalty shootout, in which current England boss Gareth Southgate missed a crucial spot-kick and was vilified for it in the English press, almost as much as the cursed gray shirt, which was soon discarded.

It seems that '96 was a vintage year for unlucky gray shirts in English football. Manchester United was at the height of the high-flying Alex Ferguson-era, when the team found itself trailing Southampton at halftime by three goals to nil. Fergie, livid, demanded the team ditch its gray away strip. His players emerged in the second half in blue and white and, while United managed to pull a goal back, and didn't concede again, it wasn't enough to save the game, or the shirt, from being chalked up as a lost cause.

Somber colors, it seems, are a no-no, then. Wales was the next international team to find this out in 2016, when it went on its surprise sprint to the semifinals of that year's European Championship. It lost two games in the whole competition, a group game against England and the semi against Portugal, wearing its now cursed "black and anthracite" second strip. While it looked cool, with its sublimated dark gray hoops and bright green trim, it is a shirt that will only ever be associated with disappointment and despair. It was worn one more time in a qualifying match for Russia 2018, which again Wales lost, forcing the team to play the remaining fixture that required a changed strip — against Moldova in 2017 — in a quickly adapted, off-the-shelf yellow Adidas training shirt. Wales went on to secure a 3-0 win and the group's top spot, albeit briefly.

An honorable mention must also be given to Cameroon, which in 2004 debuted a ridiculous all-in-one kit at the Africa Cup of Nations. After already falling foul of FIFA in the 2002 competition for wearing sleeveless shirts, Cameroon further stoked the governing body's ire with its skintight football onesie. After being told to change the kit after the group stage, Cameroon refused, wearing the onesie in the quarterfinal with Nigeria, which it subsequently lost.

FIFA, incensed by this flagrant disregard for its authority, issued Cameroon with a hefty fine (which kit manufacturer Puma paid) and docked the team six points from its subsequent World Cup and Africa Cup of Nations qualifying campaigns, respectively. Following a court case, FIFA reinstated the points, the onesie was consigned to the dustbin of history and no more was said about the football fashion faux pas.

Sadly, I fear that, now, Spain's beautiful baby blue second strip will — if you'll pardon the pun — follow suit.

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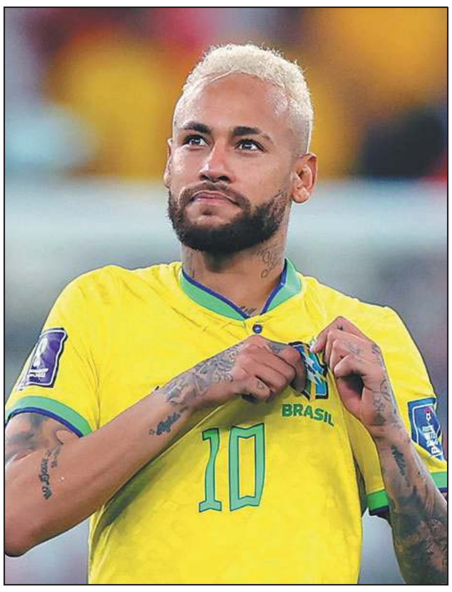

Croatia's Luka Modric (left) and Brazil's Neymar will battle for a place in the World Cup semifinals when their teams meet at Education City Stadium in Doha on Friday. Croatia was the runner-up behind France at the 2018 tournament, while Brazil has won the World Cup a record five times. AFP

The Netherlands' Memphis Depay (left) and Argentina's Lionel Messi will hope to be among the goals in Friday night's World Cup quarterfinal at Lusail Stadium in Al Daayen. Messi is aiming to emulate the great Diego Maradona, who led Argentina to the title in 1986. AFP

Now the battle really begins

Stage set for intriguing quarterfinal matchups as stakes rise at World Cup

By JAMES BOYLAN
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And then there were eight... Croatia, Brazil, the Netherlands, Argentina, Morocco, Portugal, France and England remain from the 32 teams that kicked off the World Cup. The group stage and last 16 served up entertainment and drama in abundance, but the quarterfinals are where the real work starts. Here's a look at the mouth-watering matchups that await.

Croatia vs Brazil

Brazil let loose in a last-16 dismantling of South Korea to remind everyone why it was installed as the pre-tournament favorite. For anyone who bet on Tite's side, just as reassuring as Neymar's smooth return from injury was the team's ability to thrive without the services of Arsenal ace Gabriel Jesus, who will miss the remainder of the tournament with a knee injury. In a throwback to vintage Brazil sides, Tite's smiling assassins sliced their way through the Koreans with joyous precision, and then twisted the knife with some celebratory samba routines. Friday's clash against a street-smart Croatia team — the 2018 runner-up — is likely to be more chess than dance moves. "We still have many celebrations left, and hopefully we can keep scoring and dancing like this until the final," said Real Madrid star Vinicius Junior. Croatia midfielder Mateo Kovacic indicated his team will attempt to muscle Brazil out of their rhythm. "We are accustomed to very tough physical games in the Premier League and that's something that we want to show against Brazil," the Chelsea player said. "We want to show our technical quality too but we want to show our physical quality in every duel and in possession." That's easier said than done, however, and in Neymar, Richarlison, Raphinha and Vinicius Junior, the Selecao boast more than enough invention to crack the Croats, whose overreliance on the majestic Luka Modric grows more glaring by the match.

Netherlands vs Argentina

After battling cancer, Louis van Gaal is back to his belligerent best. Watching the stroppy Dutchman outwit media and opponents has been one of the unexpected joys of this tournament. "Write down that it's boring and that you're going home tomorrow because you couldn't care less," growled Van Gaal at one brave journalist. "I'm here until the final," responded the hack, before Louis had the last laugh: "Excellent, I'll see you there." Pure bravado or pure belief? The way the Dutch expertly picked off an albeit naive US team, one has to surmise the latter. Allowing the opponent to have the ball and playing on the counterattack against Argentina, however, is an altogether different proposition. How Van Gaal will try to minimize the threat of Lionel Messi and, at the other end of the pitch, maximize the talents of breakout star Cody Gapko makes this a fascinating encounter. Netherlands defender Virgil van Dijk was keen to debunk the perception that Argentina is a one-man team. "Argentina has many good footballers who can make a difference. They are players we must watch. That's what we're going to do," Van Dijk insisted. The Liverpool man was likely to referring to Julian Alvarez and Enzo Fernandez. The late injury withdrawal of Giovanni Lo Celso before the tournament had deprived Argentina of a key midfield cog, however the promotion off the bench of Fernandez following the shock opening defeat to Saudi Arabia has oiled the wheels again, thereby enabling Messi to weave his magic. If the 'Little Maestro' can dispatch the Dutch, then a possible blockbuster final showdown with Cristiano Ronaldo's Portugal draws enticingly closer.

Morocco vs Portugal

The Portuguese proved that the Cristiano Ronaldo soap opera can't cramp their style in the 6-1 annihilation of Switzerland. With the stifling presence of the 'Incredible Sulk' now banished to the bench, the shackles are off for the likes of Joao Felix, Bernardo Silva, Bruno Fernandes, Rafael Leao and Ronaldo's hat-trick hero replacement, Goncalo Ramos. Portugal's sumptuous brand of football against the Swiss was up there with Brazil's swashbuckling best. Portugal somehow rarely figured in people's pre-tournament predictions, which is all the more odd considering it probably boasts the best central defensive pairing at the tournament — Manchester City's Ruben Dias and Pepe, now of Porto. The 39-year-old Pepe is a veteran of four World Cups and Portugal's championship-winning team at Euro 2016, but his age-defying excellence is usually overshadowed by the Ronaldo roadshow. Portugal will need all Pepe's know-how to negotiate bigger tests that almost certainly lie ahead in Qatar. After outlasting an uninspired Spain in the last 16, Morocco deserves all the plaudits for its fairy-tale run. Paris Saint-Germain's Achraf Hakimi netted the Atlas Lions' winning penalty against Spain. As one of the finest rightbacks in the world right now, the rampaging Hakimi will no doubt spearhead another lionhearted effort against Portugal, but knocking out a second Iberian country seems a bridge too far for the north Africans. Just don't tell that to Morocco head coach Walid Regragui, who said: "No one is giving up. Everyone's playing with bandages, everyone is trying to raise their level of play and mentality. We succeeded in creating a family, and we feel there's a whole country behind us."

England vs France

Stopping or, more realistically, limiting the damage Kylian Mbappe inflicts is key to England's chances of reaching a third consecutive tournament semifinal. Mbappe looks to be on a mission in Qatar, topping the Golden Boot standings with five goals and generally lighting up the tournament with his turbo-charged attacks. Pacy England rightback Kyle Walker is being billed by the English press as the man to put the brakes on Mbappe, and the Manchester City defender has bullishly — and probably foolishly — called out the superstar in the prematch buildup. "I am not going to roll out a red carpet for him and tell him to go and score," said Walker. "I'm representing my country at the quarterfinal in a World Cup, it's do or die really. If we lose, we go home. He's not going to stand in my way of winning a World Cup for my country." Rather than relying on Walker's intervention, England will hope to deprive Mbappe of service from midfield, where the Three Lions match up very favorably against Les Bleus. Without the injured Paul Pogba and N'Golo Kante — two stalwarts of the 2018 World Cup triumph in Russia — Aurelien Tchouameni has been France's most solid midfield performer so far, and the Real Madrid star is now set for an intriguing battle with Jude Bellingham. The 19-year-old Bellingham is possibly the most gifted player to pull on an England shirt since Paul Gascoigne. And, judging by his post-match interviews, the Borussia Dortmund prospect appears better equipped mentally to handle the pressures of stardom than the troubled Gazza. Bellingham completely ran proceedings against Iran and Senegal, and if he can manage a repeat performance against France, then the likes of Bukayo Saka, Harry Kane and Marcus Rashford might just have enough guile up front to dethrone the defending champion.

Portugal's Goncalo Ramos (left) and Morocco's Achraf Hakimi starred in the last 16 and will hope to continue their fine form when the teams meet at Al Thumama Stadium in Doha on Saturday. AFP / AP

England's Jude Bellingham (left) and France's Kylian Mbappe will spearhead their teams' hopes in Saturday's quarterfinal clash at Al Bayt Stadium in Al Khor. REUTERS / AP

Taffarel tutelage keeps Brazil goalkeepers in safe hands

Brazil's current first-choice goalkeeper Alisson Becker was still a toddler when Claudio Taffarel dived to his left to keep out Daniele Massaro's spot-kick and set up the Selecao's penalty shootout win over Italy in the 1994 World Cup final.

Almost three decades after helping Brazil win its fourth World Cup, Taffarel is again playing a role as the South Americans bid to lift the trophy for a record-extending sixth time.

That final at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena ended 0-0 after extra time and after Taffarel's save, Dunga converted for Brazil before Roberto Baggio blazed his kick over the bar to give Brazil its first World Cup since the great side of 1970.

"I used to shout 'Taffarel!' It is something that marked not only my childhood but also that of many Brazilians," Alisson, who was not even 2 years old when that final took place, told Globo Esporte recently as he remembered seeing the great goalkeeper in action as a youngster.

Nowadays the shaven-headed Taffarel is 56 and is the Selecao's goalkeeping coach, working with Alisson as well as Manchester City shot stopper Ederson and Weverton of Brazilian champion Palmeiras.

While the focus will always be on Brazil's free-flowing attack, Taffarel has under his charge arguably the best trio of goalkeepers in any squad at the World Cup as the favorite prepares to play Croatia in the quarterfinals on Friday.

"He is the reference for us," says Liverpool star Alisson, who was outstanding in Monday's 4-1 last-16 win against South Korea.

"What really struck me when I started to work with him in the national team was the way he passes on his knowledge so naturally, without it being forced. He has had a great impact on my development as a goalkeeper."

Widely considered to be Brazil's greatest ever goalkeeper, Taffarel has worked on the national team staff since 2014 but since last year he has shared the role with that of goalkeeping coach under Jurgen Klopp at Liverpool.

Brazil's goalkeeping coach, Claudio Taffarel, limbers up during a training session in Doha on Nov 20. AFP

"We wanted to create our own goalkeeper philosophy," Klopp said when Taffarel arrived at Anfield.

"He was a world-class player. We spoke to Alisson and he was quite pleased about it. He's known him for some years so here we go. It's exciting. A brilliant guy."

Taffarel, who also played in Brazil's 1998 World Cup final defeat, hung up his gloves in 2003 and moved into coaching two years later, working under his former teammate Gheorghe Hagi at Turkish giant Galatasaray.

There, his first pupil was Faryd Mondragon, the Colombian who played at three World Cups.

"Claudio is an extraordinary person, a great professional. He has excellent technique with both feet as well as great knowledge of the position," Mondragon told AFP.

"Alisson, Ederson and Weverton could not be in better hands."

As a coach Taffarel has evolved along with the position itself, with goalkeepers now required to be much better with their feet than in his own playing days.

He often watches videos of other goalkeeping coaches training to learn from them and adapt his own sessions.

"We want to finish games without conceding because when you don't let in goals you have more tranquility when it comes to attacking," he said in Doha, just before Germany's Manuel Neuer overtook him as the goalkeeper with most World Cup appearances, on 19.

On the way to the World Cup, Brazil conceded a total of just five goals in 17 qualifiers as Taffarel got his wish to rotate between all his goalkeepers.

But in Qatar Alisson is clearly the first choice, with Ederson starting the final group game against Cameroon while Weverton came off the bench late against South Korea.

"We are like a family where everyone cares for and respects each other, and we are getting results on the field, which is the main thing," said Weverton, who at 34 is the veteran among Brazil's goalkeepers at this World Cup.

AFP